



Teacher mediation in L2 classroom task-based interaction

Phung Dao ^{a,*}, Noriko Iwashita ^b

^a Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. W., Montreal Quebec, H3G 1M8, Canada

^b The University of Queensland, Brisbane St Lucia, 4072, QLD, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 18 July 2017

Received in revised form 14 March 2018

Accepted 24 March 2018

Keywords:

Teacher mediation

ZPD

Classroom interaction

Recast

Mediation

ABSTRACT

Guided by the holistic view of the sociocultural theory towards learning and focusing on teacher assistance to learners' process of working through tasks, the current study investigated teacher task-related assistance and language mediation, and how language mediation is adjusted according to learner's responsivity in classroom interaction. Sixteen Chinese learners of English residing in Canada carried out meaning-focused tasks in an intact classroom, taught by an experienced teacher over a four-week period. Approximately 12 h of audio-recorded classroom interactions were transcribed and analysed qualitatively using microanalysis method to examine characteristics of teacher task-related and language mediation. The results indicate that the teacher provided both task-related assistance, which addressed different task issues (e.g., task clarification, modeling, eliciting, and direction), and language mediation that featured diverse characteristics and varying degree of collaboration, which led us to identify two levels of mediation: low and highly collaborative. These results are discussed in terms of the role of teacher task-related assistance and language mediation on assisting and mediating learner's appropriation of language form and process of working through tasks.

© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In language classrooms, meaning-focused tasks are often introduced as a primary means for promoting second language (L2) learning (Crookes & Gass, 1993; Long, 2014; Robinson, 2011). Apart from focusing on tasks, previous research has investigated teacher assistance primarily in the form of various types of feedback during interaction (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001; Loewen & Philp, 2006; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). However, simply documenting teacher's assistance to learners in terms of instances and types of feedback does not capture a comprehensive picture of how teachers actually assist learners in the course of interacting towards task goals (Philp, 2016; Samuda, 2001; van Gorp & van den Branden, 2015). According to the holistic view of the sociocultural theory towards language learning that takes all individuals and social environmental factors into consideration, teacher's assistance including both assistance on language and task-related issues, supports learners to complete a particular activity (Platt, & Brooks, 2002; van Compernelle, 2015). In language learning activities, teacher's task assistance and language mediation could occur in every step of the task activity. As a complement to previous research on tasks within the sociocultural theory, this study aims to explore how teachers assist and mediate learners in task-based activities, and how task-related assistance and language mediation together assist learners in the

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: v_dao@live.concordia.ca (P. Dao), n.iwashita@uq.edu.au (N. Iwashita).

process of working through tasks. The next sections will discuss teacher's task-related assistance and language mediation in task-based interaction.

1.1. Teacher's task-related assistance

Teacher's task-related assistance refers to assistance that addresses task issues other than language such as clarification of task instruction, procedure, execution, task modeling. [Excerpt 1](#) illustrates an instance of task-related assistance in which learners had difficulty starting the activity ([Platt and Brooks, 2002](#), p. 377).

Excerpt 1. Difficulty getting the activity started

1	E:	ok [returns & gives pencils] thank you very much for participating and I'm just gonna be here manning the camera [pause of 54 s begins]
2	C:	[looks up and smiles at T; gestures for her to begin, palm up and moving toward her]
3	T:	[scratches head, looks at map]
4	C:	[puts hand to face, fist over mouth]
5	T:	[puts pencil in her mouth]
6	C:	[puts pencil beside his mouth]
7	T:	[moves pencil around]
8	E:	Nobody's talking [laughs nervously]
9	T:	[looks at C]
10	E:	Ok you can ask each other [silence continues 10 s]
11	T:	[scratches her head, throws her hand into the air, and looks at C with a disgusted "this is ridiculous, what are we supposed to do?" look]

In [Excerpt 1](#), participants' difficulty getting the activity started is evidenced through their silence, gesture and facial expressions (lines 2–7). The elapsed time of difficulty was then broken by the teacher researcher's (E) intervening turn *nobody's talking* (line 8) and a brief suggestion *ok you can ask each other* (line 10). Participants' difficulty was partly attributed to their unfamiliarity with the activity type and lack of strategies for executing the activity ([Platt, & Brooks, 2002](#)). In sum, [Excerpt 1](#) showed that those task-related difficulties are likely to occur in task-based interaction.

The occurrence of task-related issues as seen in [Excerpt 1](#) also indicates that it is not always the case that learners would understand how to carry out the task after receiving instructions. Thus, when learners do not understand or misunderstand what they are required to do to complete the task, providing just language input may not produce useful results. For that reason, task-related assistance which receives less attention in previous L2 research needs to be brought to the forefront along with teacher assistance that concerns language problems (i.e., language mediation). Additionally, given that both task-related and language assistance would help learners to engage in a task, what has not been much investigated in previous research within sociocultural perspective is how the teacher's task-related assistance and language mediation go hand in hand to assist learners in co-constructing L2 knowledge during the course of completing tasks. This points to the importance of looking at both teacher task-related assistance and language mediation in order to explore how they together help the learners co-construct L2 knowledge during interaction, which may potentially lead to L2 development.

1.2. Teacher's language mediation

As discussed earlier, teachers provide language mediation that helps learners to internalize mediational means (e.g., L2 concepts and meanings) during task activities. Teacher language mediation refers to assistance that addresses learners' language problems. The sociocultural approach conceptualizes mediation as various forms of assistance provided to help learners appropriate psychological tools such as language forms, patterns of language use and meanings that are then used independently to regulate their mental activity during task performance ([Lantolf & Thorne, 2006](#); [van Compernelle, 2015](#)). Teacher mediation is perceived to help learners develop a better understanding on the way to appropriation of language forms ([Lantolf & Thorne, 2006](#)). Additionally, teacher mediation not only supports learners to work towards task completion but also scaffolds and responds to their needs in the interaction of "working collaboratively through tasks" ([Poehner & van Compernelle, 2011](#), p. 191).

The sociocultural theory considers language learning as a socially situated and collaboratively co-constructed activity, taking all actions in interaction into consideration during the process of language knowledge construction ([Donato, 2000](#); [Lantolf & Thorne, 2006](#); [Ohta, 2001](#)). It specifically highlights co-construction of knowledge through collaboration and mutual assistance from all participants (e.g., teacher and learners) in enabling learners to achieve what they cannot attain individually. L2 development in the sociocultural theory, therefore, refers to a qualitative transformation of psychological functioning resulting from the internalization of mediational tools, which enables learners to manipulate semiotic artifacts to perform their intended communication ([Lantolf & Thorne, 2006](#); [Zinchenko, 2002](#); [van Compernelle, 2015](#)). In language classrooms, teacher language mediation is believed to enable learners to appropriate language forms for communication and transform communicative capacities and mental functioning as a result of a process of obtaining control over psychological tools such as language forms, patterns of language use and meanings ([Lantolf, 2012](#)).

Within the sociocultural approach that views task-based interaction as a site for L2 knowledge co-construction through mediation ([Gutiérrez, 2008](#); [Ohta, 2001](#)), teacher assistance that addresses language issues is perceived as language mediation that stimulates learners' self-regulation and joint construction of knowledge to arise during interaction (see [Rassaei,](#)

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6849323>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6849323>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)