SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN LANGUAGE-EXCHANGE INTERACTIONS: A SOCIOCULTURAL AND DISCOURSE ANALYTIC STUDY


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This study examines language-exchange interactions between second/foreign language learners in an out-of-class setting. The purpose is to find out whether and how language-exchange interactions provide a space for potential language learning to its participants and how learners create opportunities for language learning and teaching in conversations with their language-exchange partners.

Drawing on poststructuralist view on identity as performance (Butler, 1990), sociocultural theory of learning (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978), and the ecological concept of affordance (van Lier, 2000), this study employs video- and audio-recordings of language-exchange interactions along with interviews with language-exchange participants to examine the dialogic interaction between eight language-exchange pairs and explore their experiences. The analysis focuses on (1) the construction of expert and novice identities in language-exchange interactions, (2) participants' initiative to create opportunities for language learning and teaching, and (3) their collaboration in co-constructing dialogues for reciprocal language learning.

The findings demonstrate that participant roles as linguistic expert and novice are not invoked in language-exchange interactions unless they are treated as relevant in the interaction; rather than foregrounded by the situational arrangements of language-exchange, the expert-novice relationship in language-exchange dialogues is interactionally constituted by the local practices of the participants. In language-exchange dialogues, learners create opportunities for language learning and teaching by employing self-initiated agency; however, not all learners are active in providing linguistic assistance to their partners, or making use of the linguistic affordances for the benefit of their own language learning. The findings show that those who are able to shape the interaction to create opportunities for language learning employ effective learning and questioning strategies. Additionally, opportunities for two-way language learning occur in language-exchange dialogues when the learners engage in a cross-linguistic comparison or collaborative problem-solving. As the learners shift their roles as expert and novice for mutual support, affordances are generated for reciprocal language learning, creating learning opportunities for both participants.

Based on the findings, I suggest that language-exchange interactions may serve as a useful context for language learning for students learning a second/foreign language. Finally, I propose different ways in which learners can maximize the benefits that language-exchange may offer them.

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Second Language Acquisition

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