

Peer interaction & L2 learning



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INTERACTION

TALKING WITH OTHERS facilitates L2 learning

1. by trying to communicate, to struggle to be understood and to understand ...
 - Comprehensible input & comprehensible output
 - When problems arise, learners may learn new vocabulary, resolve misunderstandings, and notice more about how language “works” : how form and meaning connect.
 - The need to communicate pushes learners to produce more complex or accurate language forms.

(Gass, 1997, Long, 1996; Mackey 2007; Swain, 2005).

10 principles of instructed language learning (Ellis, 2014) → learners need ...

LOTS of
[comprehensible]
input and output

Build fluency,
productive use of
language, develop
underlying rules of
language

To develop implicit
AND
explicit knowledge

To pay attention to
how language works
(form, meaning and
use)

Time on task



1. What is peer interaction?

2. What can it look like?
Possibilities and problems



3. Purposes : How can peer interaction support language learning?

1. What is peer interaction?

(Blum-Kulka and Snow, 2009; Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2014)

1. Peers provide equivalence e.g. age, skill, proficiency, or class

So peer talk is often symmetrical - in contrast to the teacher-student relationship, in which the teacher holds authority, knowledge and experience.

2. Activity between learners, ideally **collaborative** - participants working together toward a common goal.

3. Minimal or no participation from the teacher.

What about the teacher?

- Teachers play an essential role
- But it is often “behind the scenes”
 - Selecting good tasks, assigning appropriate roles
 - Ensuring learners have the resources they need
 - Creating a positive learning environment
- Training is very important for effective interaction
(e.g., Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997; Mercer, 1996; O’Donnell, 2006 ; Sato & Ballinger, 2012).

Some types of peer learning (Damon & Phelps, 1989a)

collaborative learning

- Involves a strong sense of mutuality and joint effort– students depend on one another to complete the task
- (Damon & Phelps, 1989a; Topping & Ehly, 1998)

cooperative learning

- Peers work together to a common goal, though not necessarily together
- (McCafferty, Jacobs, & DaSilva Iddings, 2006)

peer tutoring

- One peer assumes a position of tutor and instructs or assists the other in some way



Teacher
and
individual

Individual
seat work

Teacher
and small
group

Teacher
and whole
class

Homework

peer interaction
is ONE of other
contexts for
learning and
language use



ONE of other contexts for learning and language use

“ peer interaction is both **influenced by** and **complements** other types of interactions and experiences that occur”

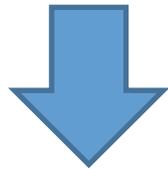
(Philp et. al 2014, p. 10)



What are some purposes for peer interaction in language classrooms?

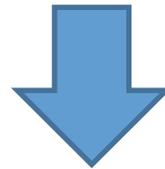
(Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2014)

As a context for



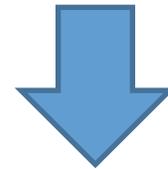
Experimenting with Language

- Stretching language use, exploring new forms...



Correcting

- Focus on form
- Corrective feedback



Polishing Language

- Practice : time on task
- Becoming more fluent

1. Experimenting with Language

How does this support language learning?

Peer interaction can be a context for :

- **practice and meaningful use** of the L2
- **making sense** of novel input
- **noticing** problems and novel forms
- receiving **feedback**
- **Trying out** language, **modifying** production.

→ Being under pressure to understand and to make coherent use of language can be a catalyst for change

(Bygate & Samuda, 2009; Gass, 1997)003, Swain, 1993)

Struggling to communicate

→ focus on language (Azkarai & Garcia-Mayo, in press)

- 1. Miguel: Where is the the thing that we use to put with hand inside?
- 2. Susana: Oh, yes! To take something?
- 3. Miguel: For the *horno* [oven]. Cook? In the *horno* [oven].
- 4. Susana: Yeah, oven.
- 5. Miguel: Oven. Yes.
- 6. Susana: Ok. Er...

[Picture placement task, Spanish-Basque adult EFL learners]

Focusing on how to say...

S: How how many times did you (..) do (..) a plastic surgery, maybe one time

[4 turns later]

S: Did you do did you have did you have maybe have

J: I think have you gone I think have you gone, because it's already finish, surgery

S: How many times did you

J: Have you gone a plastic surgery, I'm not sure but

(data from Cao, 2009)

[Writing a survey about plastic surgery, adult EAP learners]

- “Working alongside friends, feeling relaxed, and having fun trying out the new language regardless of mistakes creates a positive environment for learning, and can be **motivating** for learning.”

Oliver & Philp, 2014, p. 57

The social side ...



A context for trial and error...

When you're working with your partner, you don't care about being silly ... like (laughter from other students) when you say the wrong thing, or like you try to make up a word of your own that you think is in French and like, you just have fun with your partner. You don't have to be so serious.

High school student of French (Tognini, 2008, p. 289)

Feeling (UN)comfortable to talk in group work

(Choi & Iwashita, in press)

“ No matter how well they speak English, if group members create a comfortable atmosphere to communicate with each other, I will share my ideas more actively.

If I detect something uncomfortable between group members, I usually remain silent or became very passive. And I think it is very important to see each group member as equal.

If someone reacts in a way which says that my opinion is wrong, because my English skill is not good enough, I would not want to be in the group work anymore.

[Susan (C2) Adult EFL learner, Korea]

2. Correcting Language

- For **developing target like accuracy** in L2 use, input alone appears insufficient.
- Output provides learners with **opportunities to “reflect on their output and consider ways of modifying it to enhance comprehensibility, appropriateness, and accuracy”** (Swain, 1993: 160).
- This kind of interaction, with a **clear focus on form**, and collaboration over how to say something most often occurs in **written** reconstructive tasks (e.g. dictogloss) and collaborative tasks (make up a role play, construct a survey)

Focusing on language form

(Choi & Iwashita, in press)

- H4: = You mean Barbie should give the crazy monkey some poisoned banana?
- C2: Yes, yes, (.3). I don't know how Barbie can escape from that monkey. I think (.4) she run slow.
- H4: Slowly.
- H6: Isn't it slow?
- C2: I always say 'slow' hah!
- H4: Slowly is correct. It's adverb.=
- C2: =Adverb ?=
- H6: = Oh o::k

[Adult EFL learners,
Japan]

Moranski & Toth (in press) – co-construction of rules for *se*

- Diego: This is like, stuff that's like, basically this is kind of indirect. So like things happen to her.
- **Raquel: Yeah that's what [reflexive**
- Diego: umm]
- **Raquel: =is. Something that you do to yourself.**
- Diego: No that's not re (.) [no
- **Raquel: That's] the [things with the SE ME =**
- Diego: Well kind of]
- **Raquel: =at the ends.**
- Diego: Yeah.
- **Raquel: Yeah↑ Which is reflexive, right?↑**

Spanish high school learners : working out form-meaning connections through analytic talk

Problems... when errors persist

- Learner 1: John arrive, arrove, arrove or arrive?
- Learner 2: arrove is in past.
- Learner 1: arrove airport. Or arrived.
- Learner 2: arrove is in past.
- Learner 1: I mean arrove or arrived.
- Learner 2: arroved the airplane.
- Learner 1: arrived or arrove.
- Learner 2: arrove.
- Learner 1: arrove the airport at 8:30am.

(Adams, 2007, p. 49)

Study 1 Form-focused peer interaction

(McDonough (2004)

pair and group work form focused interaction

L1: if they stopped

L3: turned off

L1: if they turned off yeah

geted
d their

iversity /

Task: Pair/group interaction in a
environment

L9: if the city build more bicycle lane

L11: again please

Task 4 and 5: Production of
discussion task & clause

trial)

The success of talking with peers

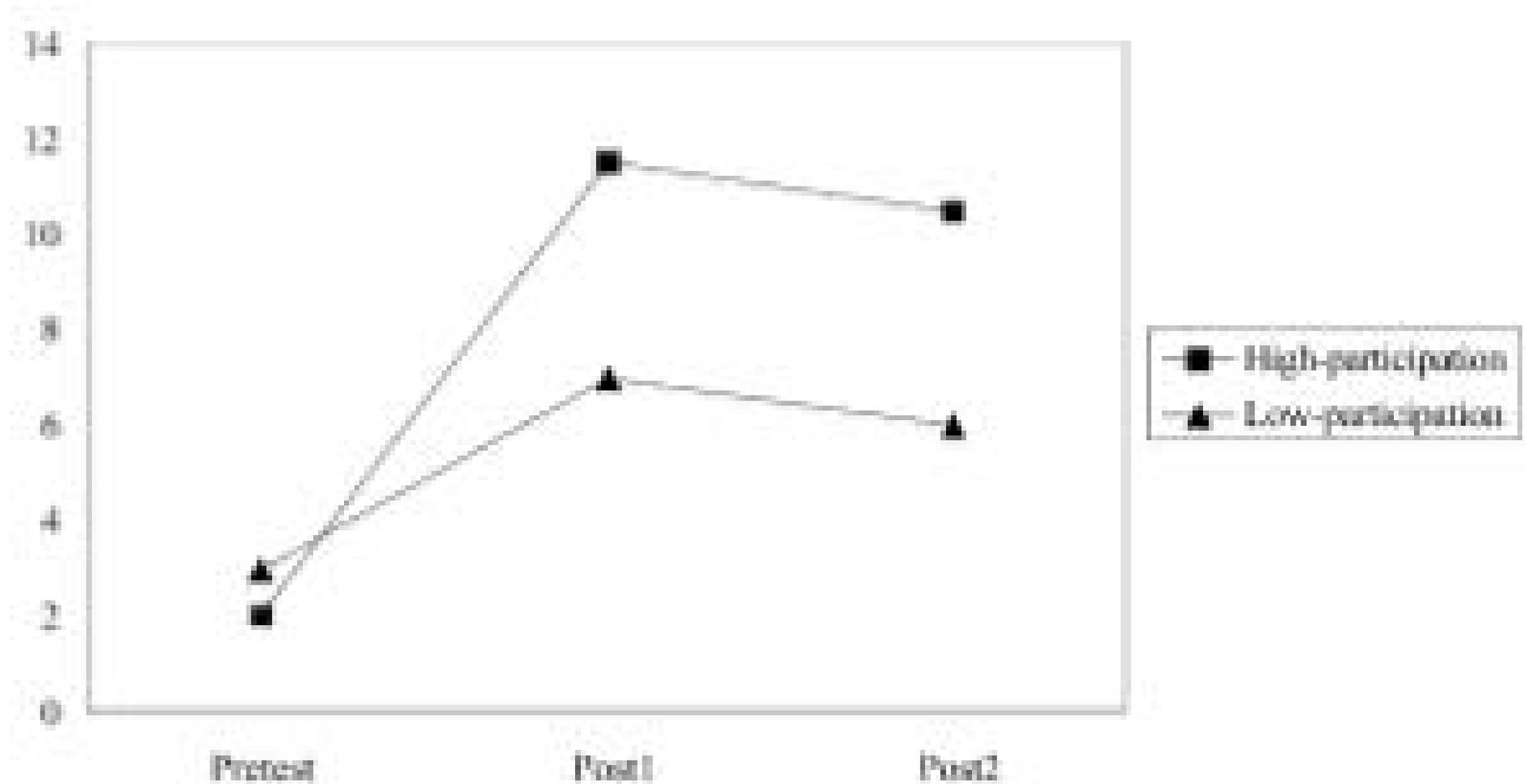


Fig. 5. Real conditional scores over time by group.

Study 1 Form-focused peer interaction (Williams, 1999, 2001)

- 8 adult ESL students over 4 weeks, taped twice weekly over a wide range of activities.
- 4 levels of proficiency represented.
- **Results**
 - Form-focused interaction, initiated by the learner, **was infrequent**, particularly **among low proficiency** learners
 - Especially on communicative tasks
 - Learners at all levels focused most on words.

Form-focused peer interaction

So Jessica Williams concludes that **low proficiency learners are** dependent on the teacher for drawing attention to form – they are unlikely to achieve this independently in peer interaction.

- Language focus and correction may be best done with the support of the teacher for lower proficiency learners

3. Polishing Language

Time on task

- **reinforce or consolidate prior knowledge**
- **increase fluency** as learners become more automatic in retrieval of forms (de Bot, 1996; DeKeyser, 2007; McDonough, 2005; Nation, 2007; Swain 2005).



Study 2 How can we foster focus on form in task-based interaction?

(Philp & Mackey, 2010; Philp, Walter, Basturkmen, 2010)

Partners

Relationships between peers & past histories

Attitudes, perceptions & expectations

Task

Task type & conditions

Proficiency relative to task "field"

Teacher input

Framing of the task

Follow up and alignment

Research Context

- French FL class (n=30), 7 focal students
- L1 English, Chinese
- Intermediate-level University students
- Pair & Group oral interaction
- Textbook based unstructured tasks

Research Questions

- Do learners engage in language related episodes during peer task-based interaction?
- What are the characteristics of the language related episodes that appear?
- What factors might account for differences in the incidence of language related episodes?

Language Related Episode (LRE)

- “*(discourse) where language learners talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others*”

(Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p. 326)

- Notice connections between form and meaning
- Identify gaps in knowledge
- Receive feedback on L2 production
- Chance to modify their own production
- Hypothesise about how language works

Research Design

- 3 weeks of observation of classes (4x1hr/wk) + field notes
- Digital recordings : teacher & 7 learners
- Stimulated-recall / prompted interviews : 7 learners in week 3
 - “so what’s going on there?”
 - “why did you say that in English?”
 - “how did you feel then?”
 - “tell me, what were you thinking then?”
 - “anything else?” “why?” “uh huh?”



Analysis : focus on language

Language related episodes (Swain & Lapkin, 1998)

LREs in Pair/group work

- Incidence during meaning-focused tasks
- Focus : Lexical, grammatical, phonological
- Source : self-initiated, peer-initiated, teacher-initiated

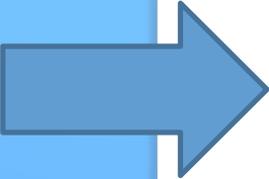
Stimulated recall

- Factors contributing to incidence of LREs in group work

A peer-initiated lexical LRE

Student A: Il y a uh uh il y a beaucoup de
choisi choisi [sic]

*There's uh uh there's lots of
chose chose*



Student B: Choix?

Choice?

Student A: Oui

Yes

(Task 1)

Tasks – Week 2

Task	Description
1. Deciding where to visit	Pair discussion
2. Booking a hotel room by phone	Role play
3. Recalling a hotel you've stayed at	Narrative account

Tasks – Week 3

4. Etiquette and dinner invitations	Collaborative reconstruction
5. Booking into a hotel	Role play
6. Selecting from a menu for 2 people with specific requirements	Collaborative reconstruction
7. Restaurant scene	Group role play
8. Making a complaint	Dialogue reconstruction

Results : Incidence

Tasks	No. of interactions	Total LREs	Total LRE turns	Total Conversational turns
8	26	31	153	964
% LREs = 15.871				

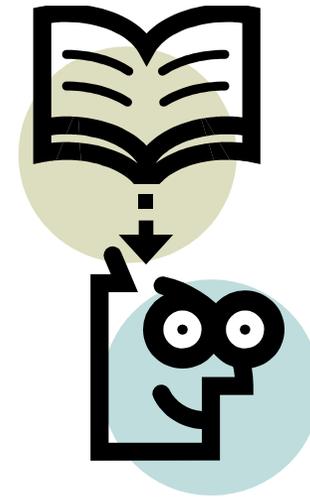
Focus & Source

Focus			Total LREs 31
Lexical	Phonological	Grammatical	
23	1	7	
Source			
Self-initiated	Peer-initiated	Teacher-initiated	
16	13	2	

When are learners more likely to provide feedback or focus on language?

- When tasks are reconstructive, or encourage use of particular language forms
- When peers are comfortable working together
- Social factors
 - ✓ Relationships
 - ✓ Perceptions of others
 - ✓ Orientation to tasks
 - ✓ Attitude towards errors

Orientation to the task (introspective data)



- Ben
- - and yes I try to use phrases er er from the text er I had my book in front of me and I found some things in it which are like er *je vais prendre une salade* blah blah blah and [teacher] told us to try and use the things so I saw them and I thought why not I er (..) borrowed that way of saying *je vais prendre une salade de tomates* as an entrée or

Orientation to the task

- Gerard

G: I was thinking about how my host brother was always very proud of the Côtes de Rhone wine and so at the dinner table he would always say oh we should have the Côtes de Rhone wine

J: you all sounded like you were at a restaurant

G: I was playing up the annoyed customer

and I was like “eh garcon” I was ordering formally for us (...) **cos that’s the way**



Attitude towards Interlocutor

Ben: *When you talk to someone who's more important uhm if I uhm ask the teacher something ahhh I'm more hesitant but also I take a lot of care to make sure that I'm talking in an appropriate way and make sure that I don't say don't make grammatical and pronunciation mistakes and so on...*

... but when I talk to close friends ah it doesn't bother me if I've made mistakes

Attitude towards Interlocutor

V: I found that I h I didn't really know how to talk to uhm this girl I think her name was Helen uhm she sits next to me sometimes and she has this expression like I don't understand you

J: oh ok

V: and so sometimes I feel quite nervous talking to her (...) she just doesn't seem to understand and so I'll be thinking well is this my pronunciation problem or like am I saying this correctly or yeah [laughter]

Attitude towards errors

Violette: I think when you're talking spontaneously you don't correct yourself as much

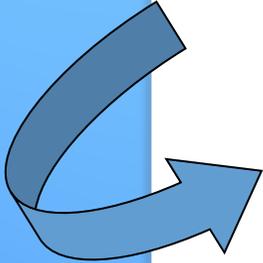
I think most of the time uhm because we're still learning we don't really correct each other because we're afraid that we might be wrong ourselves

Choosing not to correct

- *BEN Normally yes normally it does throw me a bit but uhm I don't want to be uhm I make mistakes myself so uhm [...] I **don't want to be better than them I'm just another student***

Accounting for occurrence of LREs

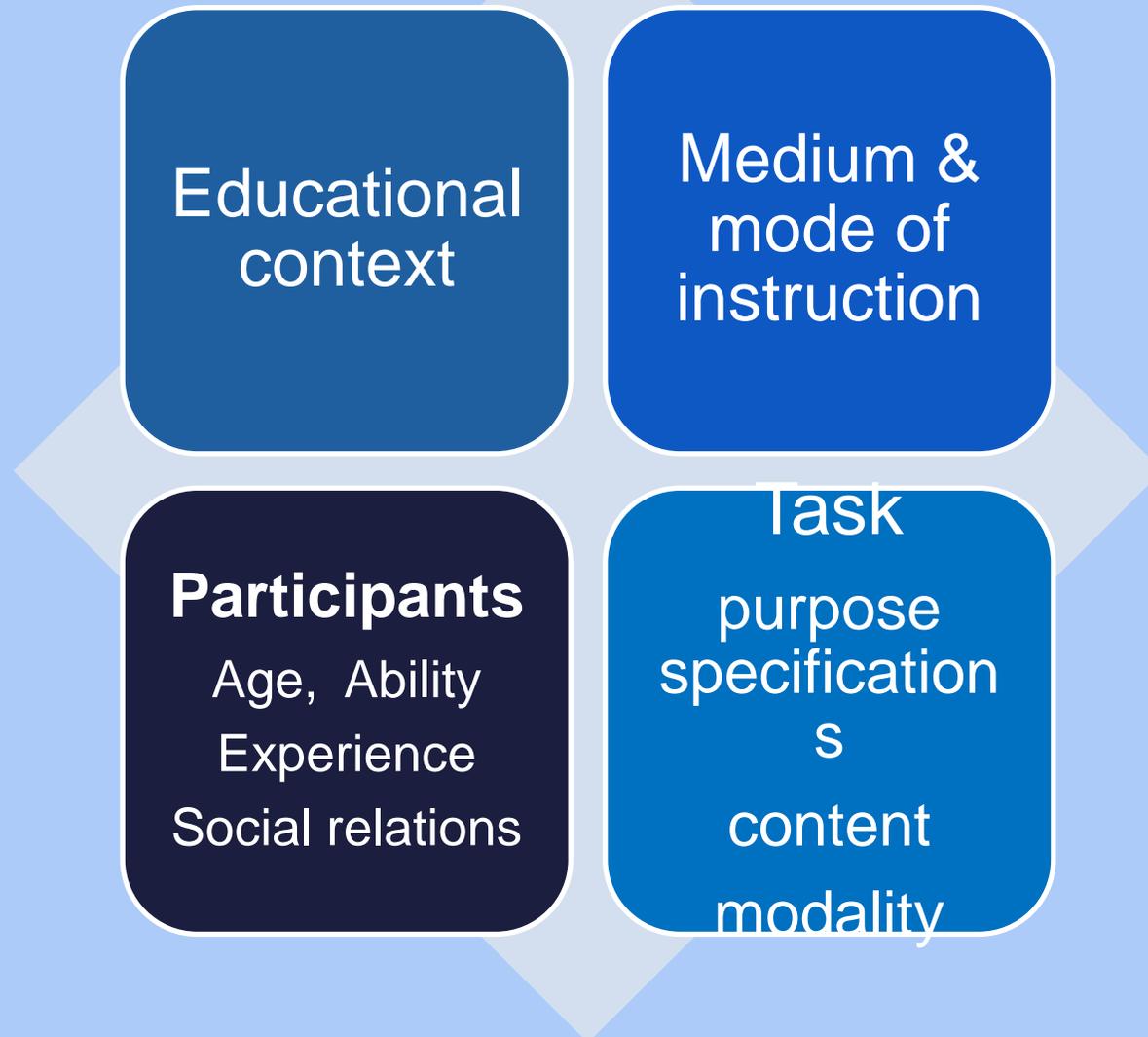
- Noticing the gap
- Task features
- Pre-task support
- Proficiency level
- Relationships between peers, past histories



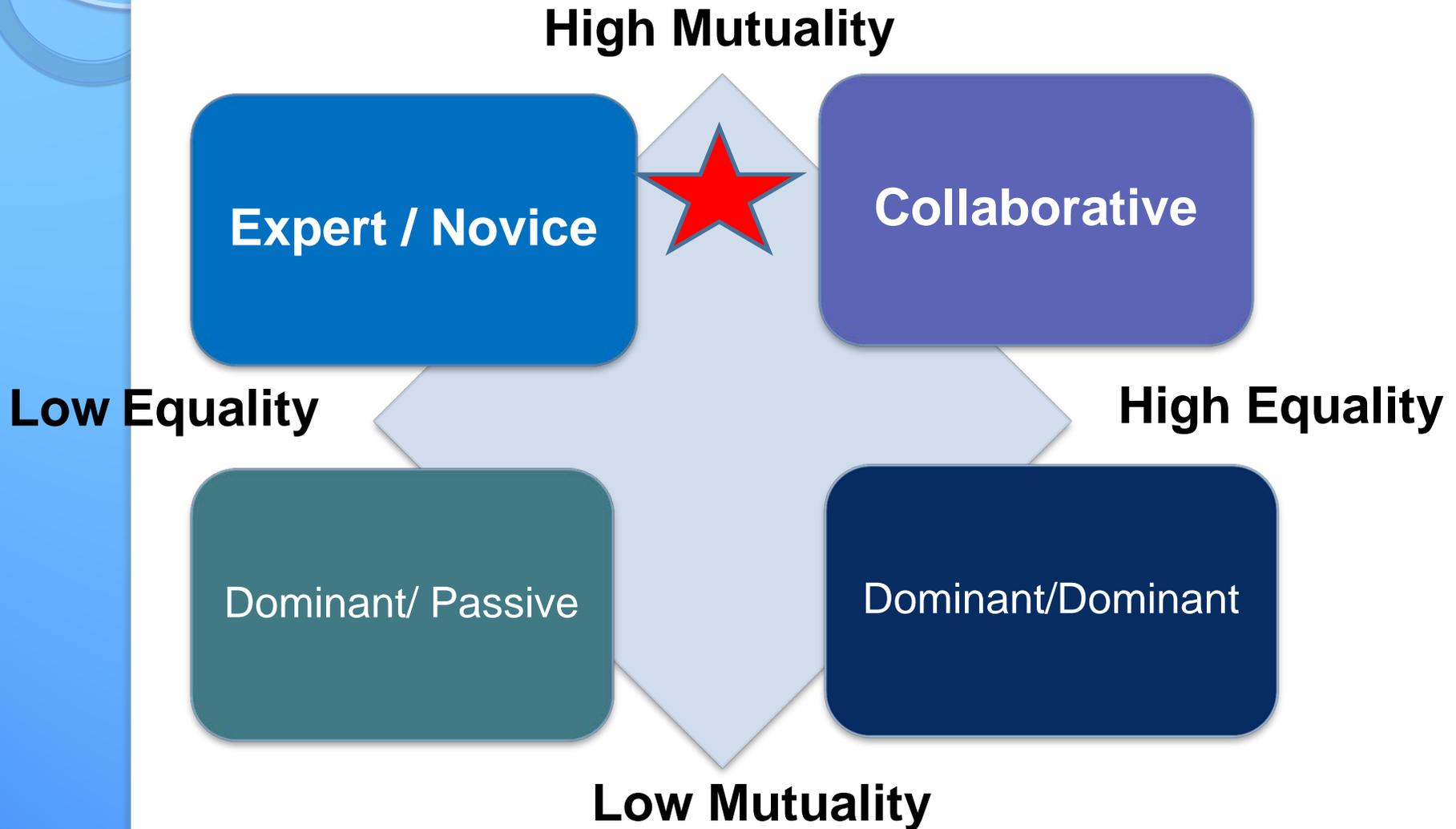
Learner attitudes towards

- error correction
- the task
- the interlocutor

peer interaction can be ... positive or negative for learning



Relationships between peers & patterns of interaction (Damon & Phelps, 1989; Storch, 2002)



Co-operating, collaborating in pairs

Luu Trong Tuan (2010, p. 65) *English*

Language Teaching, www.ccsenet.org/elt

“I feel most motivated to talk to a partner sitting in front of me since I can see him or her listening to me, agreeing or disagreeing with me,” said a male student.

“A bit shy at first in front of a male partner,” a female student said, “but I felt closer to him along the conversation. He encouraged and even helped me as I was stuck for an idea.

“A collaborative mindset” (Ballinger, 2013)
Challenging tasks (Baralt et al, in press)

- *I absolutely think my partner and I were equally willing to contribute in re-telling the story. We both just really saw it as a challenge and it was new and fun. My partner’s determination really motivated me, I felt like I spoke my best Spanish during this activity.*



“A collaborative mindset” (Ballinger, 2013)
Challenging tasks (Baralt et al, in press)

“good challenge, I want more tasks like this to make me really think, I had to work hard but my partner helped me, this task pushed me to really use Spanish like I never have before”.

“A collaborative mindset” (Ballinger, 2013)
Challenging tasks (Baralt et al, in press)

- *To be honest I hated this task. I didn't really know the person I was chatting with, and I don't think he really cared about working with me. He just wanted to get the task done and didn't really talk to me at all. It was weird, we didn't even really take turns. I tried but he just kept going so finally I just let him retell the story and mentally checked out.*

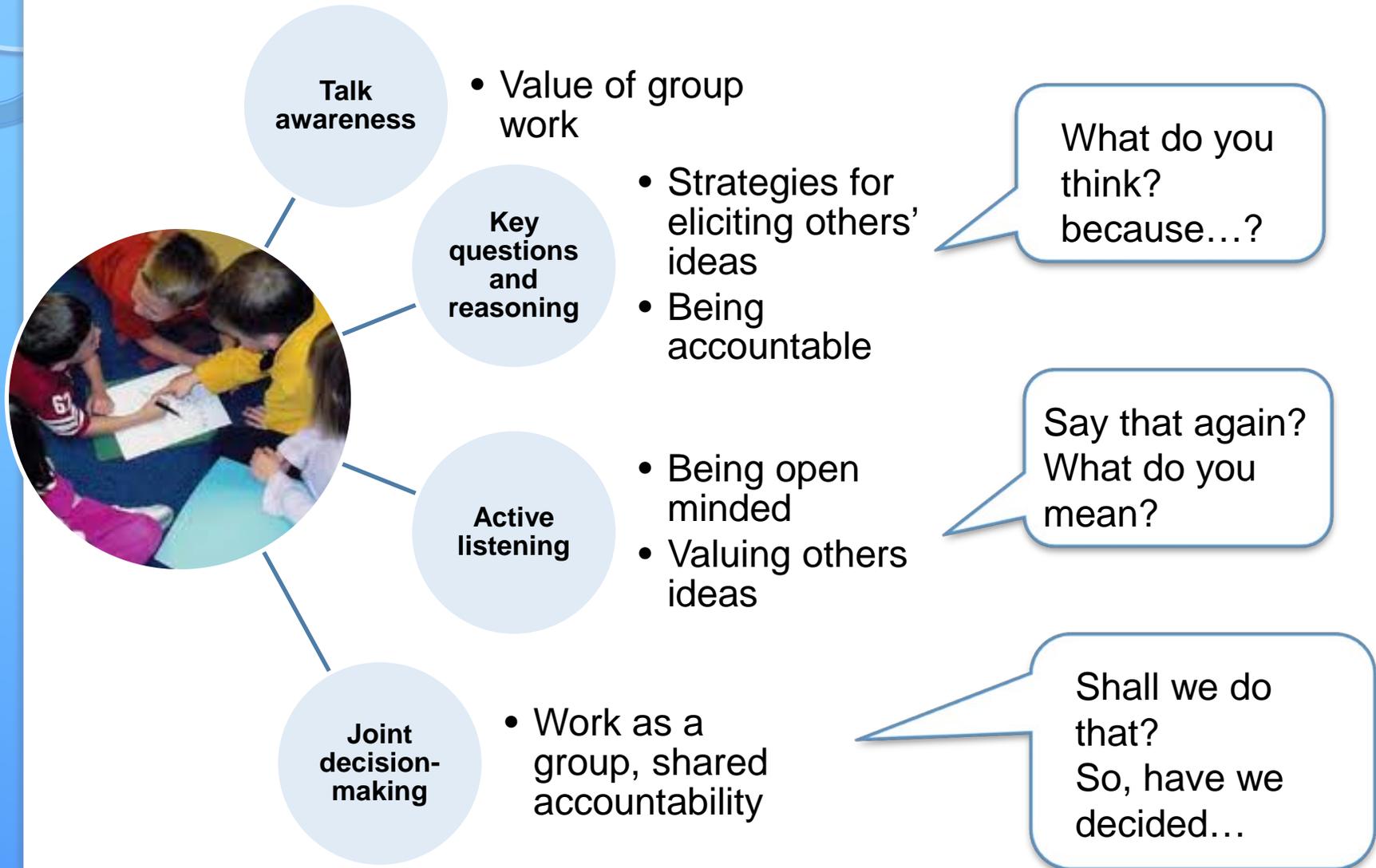
Effective group work doesn't just happen...

- Need to foster a supportive learning environment
- Explicit training for children in cooperative communication skills is vital

(Corden, 2000; Dawes, 2004; Mercer, 1996; O'Donnell, 2006).

- Mercer (1996) emphasizes that children are capable of collaboration but need to be explicitly given “the ground rules.” That is, cooperation is a skill that can be nurtured and developed through instruction and modelling

Learning how to talk and think together (Dawes, 2004)



Summary : Peer interaction and learning

Multiple purposes : different outcomes

Experimenting with Language

- Stretching language use, exploring new forms...

Correcting

- Focus on form
- Corrective feedback

Polishing Language

- Practice : time on task
- Becoming more fluent

- Motivating learners to use the L2 successfully
- Working together, helping each other
- An enjoyable experience

New edited collection on Peer Interaction
Masatoshi Sato & Susan Ballinger (in
press)

**New directions in research on peer
interaction:**

- Task effects e.g. Complexity, modality (written vs oral ; F2F vs CMC)
- Social factors e.g. The importance of peer relations; patterns of interaction
- Engagement : cognitive, social, affective
- Learning outcomes

Sato & Viveros

- Adolescents
- "collaborative learning may be more effective than problem solving because of greater feedback"

Suggests group work can offer potentially wider options for learning + highlights role of teacher

Fernández Dobao silent learner

- Young adult learners
 - Focus on lexis
 - Knowledge vs validation of knowledge
 - Move beyond LREs to other roles as observer/contributor/solver

Social sides to peer interaction...

The influence of modality...

Azkarai & Garcia-Mayo

- adult
- moda
- more
- more
- BUT
- enga
- across

Highlights the importance of engagement (social, cognitive, affective)

Expect modality to make a difference (F2F vs CMC)

Baralt, Gurzynski-Weiss, and Kim

uni
ll
(active)
l
berg

Summary : Peer interaction and learning

- Peer interaction plays a different and complementary role to teacher fronted interaction
- No blanket effects for benefits of peer interaction
- Teachers have a role to play in fostering **effective peer interaction, and positive peer relationships.**

- 
- *Thank you for listening!*
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