

2009 Symposium Debriefing

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Following the previous symposia about communicative language teaching (CLT) in 2007 and team teaching (TT) in 2008, the 2009 symposium focused on “tasks” under the title of “Tasks’ Potentials for Reconstructing English Language Teaching in Japan.” Tasks in second language learning and teaching seem to be a key to directing English language teaching in Japan in a better way though there are many areas that should be empirically researched in language classroom settings. In the symposium, four presenters approached these areas to explore the potential of tasks with high expectations of restructuring English language teaching in Japan with the use of tasks.

The first presenter, Yasuhiko Wakaari, attempted to identify issues in and explore the possibility of adopting task-based language teaching in English classrooms in Japan. The second presenter, Chihiro Sato, reported on the influence of task input and conditions with an example of a jigsaw task which was intended to promote second language acquisition. The third presenter, Mizuho Torii, designed a teaching procedure to implement a task employing debate, focusing on negotiation of meaning, communication strategies, and strategic competence. Lastly, the fourth presenter, Masako Sasaki, explained the theoretical background of her language learning project and discussed the students’ written reflections on their language performance in language-use tasks and their perspective on cognitive aspects of task-based language learning.

The Q&A time after each presentation was significantly beneficial to both the audience and presenters because they contributed to understanding tasks and considering the potentials of tasks from different viewpoints of language learning, such as the reporting of group discussion in a task cycle, the unexpected effect of different kinds of task input, a mechanism for promoting second language acquisition with tasks, and students’ motivation in language-use tasks. This provided an opportunity for academic discussion.

With the advent of the new Course of Study in 2012 for junior high school and in 2013 for senior high school, the three symposium themes featured in the past annual conferences from 2007 to 2009, CLT, TT, and tasks, will surely be among the keywords as we contemplate English language teaching in Japan in future years.

**Issues in and Possibility of Adopting Task-Based Language Teaching
in English Classrooms in Japan**

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In my presentation, I asked myself and answered the following three questions:

- (1) To what extent has TBLT been implemented in ELT in Japan?
- (2) Why doesn't TBLT become the mainstream approach?
- (3) How can TBLT be implemented?

To answer Question 1, I referred to Doi (1995) and Izumi (2007), who stated as follows:

“...attempts to implement TBLT in Japan seem to have been, in most cases, not on the level of the syllabus, but on the level of classroom activities under the existing syllabus (e.g., structural syllabus), and the tasks employed in such activities are only those which try to help students acquire particular grammar rules of English...”

(Doi, 1995:313)

“...the ELT in Japan...seems to stay within the realm of ‘focus on forms’, which is the impression that I think can be shared many other people. Certainly, there are some signs which show that ‘focus on meaning’ is being gradually spreading among teachers, but still the concept seems to stay in the ancillary position...”

(Izumi, 2007:21)

On the basis of these statements, I concluded that TBLT is not implemented in full so far in Japan.

To answer Question 2, I referred to Samuda and Bygate (2008), who listed the following three problems which TBLT has:

- perceptions of task-based language teaching (TBLT) as a “top-down” initiative (Van den Branden, 2006), imposed on teachers by researchers with limited understanding of the demands of everyday pedagogy (Swan, 2005)
 - conceptual unease among teachers about the potential pedagogic value of tasks and pedagogic approaches that make significant use of tasks (Littlewood, 2007)
 - unrealistic demands and expectations placed on teachers in the implementation of task-based programmes of instruction (Van den Branden, 2006)
- (Samuda & Bygate, 2008:192-193)

In addition, I pointed out the following 13 factors in relation to the English language teaching context in Japan: (1) Language-learning environment (Takashima, 2005); (2) Classroom culture (Gray & Leather, 1999); (3) Number of class hours (Takashima, 2005); (4) Class sizes; (5) Number of examples of TBLT in Japan; (6) Teaching materials (Takashima, 2005); (7) Evaluation of tasks; (8) Teachers’ language skills; (9) Teachers’ knowledge of TBLT; (10) Teachers’ workload; (11) Cooperation with colleagues; (12) Students’ goals of language learning (Tsuduki, et al., 2008); and (13) Students’ beliefs on language learning.

To answer Question 3, I presented three models according to the level of adoption and examined their applicability in the ELT context in Japan: (1) Adopting TBLT at the curriculum level; (2) Adopting TBLT for the whole lesson; (3) Adopting TBLT for part of a lesson. The examples presented for explaining these models are based on my teaching experiences at the university level, namely my classes in (1) Materials development for graduate students, (2) Introduction to English language teaching for sophomores, and (3) English for academic purposes for freshmen, the goals of and procedures for which are stated as follows:

Class: Materials Development (MD)

Goals: Acquisition of practical knowledge of and skills in MD

- Procedures: (1) Analyze and rewrite texts in textbooks;
- (2) Develop activities for newspaper English;
 - (3) Analyze in-house materials for General English;
 - (4) Develop alternative materials for GE
 - (5) Teach a class with the developed materials;
 - (6) Revise the developed materials

Class: Introduction to English Language Teaching

Lesson goals: Qualifications for school teachers

Procedures (90 minutes in total):

- (1) Interview each other in pairs on the teachers that students have met so far;
- (2) Report your findings to your group of four;
- (3) Discuss the traits commonly found ;
- (4) Report the findings to the whole class;
- (5) Discuss what qualifications future teachers (need to) have

Class: General English II

Activity goals: To get used to speaking English

Procedures (8-15 minutes in total):

- (1) Interview each other in pairs on the topic of the lesson;
- (2) Check those expressions which you were not able to use;
- (3) Report your findings to your group of four

By examining the models from the viewpoint of practicality in relation to the ELT context in Japan, I concluded that (1) the first model is not feasible in English classes in junior and senior high schools, as in these classes the textbook functions as a syllabus and it is difficult to change the syllabus itself; (2) the second model is feasible in junior and senior high schools, but for only a few hours in a year, as the model is not compatible with the textbook; (3) the third model is more feasible in everyday teaching practices, if it is conducted for a shorter time as an unfocused task.

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The Effects of Jigsaw Task Input Types on the Interaction for Second Language Acquisition

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1. INTRODUCTION

When a second language teacher hopes that his/her students interact with each other in the target language, a jigsaw task can be one of the effective types of task, which gives the task participants a portion of input data that must be exchanged among them. Then, it is important for the teacher to well know what kinds of language learning opportunity are expected in the task. By knowing it, the teacher can have a clear vision and significance of the task implementation. The present research employs three jigsaw tasks which differ in input types given to the learners at the very beginning of the tasks, and attempts to find a variety of language learning opportunities by examining the learners' interaction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1. Jigsaw Task and Negotiation of Meaning

According to Ellis (2003), a jigsaw task is a task "where the input material is divided between two or more participants such that they are required to exchange information to complete the task" (Ellis, 2003, p. 344). In such a task, the relationship between learners is two way, in which all the individuals in a group hold a piece of information and become both information suppliers and receivers, and the learners must exchange the information for the task completion (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Gass & Varonis, 1985; Long, 1983, 1996; Long & Porter, 1985).

The jigsaw task is assumed to be most likely to provide the learners with the opportunity of negotiation of meaning (Pica, Kanagy, & Falodun, 1993), which occurs when the learners face communication breakdowns and switch their focus from message meaning to form (Long, 1996). This negotiation triggers the learners' cognitive processes in which they understand the linguistic items that were once unknown (Long, 1981, 1983) and they are pushed to make comprehensible output (Swain, 1985, 1995).

2. 2. Research Using Jigsaw Tasks

Several scholars have employed jigsaw tasks in their researches for various purposes: to compare the learners' interaction in a jigsaw task and other tasks (Gass & Varonis, 1989; Nakahama, Tyler, & Lier,

2001; Pica, Holliday, Lewis, & Morgenthaler, 1989); to compare the learners' interaction in two different jigsaw tasks (Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, & Linnell, 1996); to compare learners' interaction in a jigsaw task in different participation patterns, such as in a teacher-fronted lesson, in a group, and in a pair (Doughty & Pica, 1986).

Differently from these previous studies, the present research employs three jigsaw tasks which use the same materials, follow the same task procedures, but differ in their input types (visual input, textual input, and the combination of the visual and textual). By this task design, the research aims to explore the effects of different input types on the interaction among learners, and find language learning opportunities that can be provided in a jigsaw task.

3. THE STUDY

3.1. Participants

Participants involved in the study were 23 first-year students in the Faculty of Education and Human Studies in Akita University. As shown in Table 1, 3 or 4 learners in each group were supposed to work together for their task, divided into Team A and Team B. Team A held Yellow and Blue frames, and Team B held Red and Green frames, as shown in Appendix. The participants were told that the two frames in one team were either the 1st and 3rd or the 2nd and 4th frames of a four-frame cartoon, and they were told not to show their frames to the other team throughout the task.

Table 1
Jigsaw tasks with three different input types and the number of learners in each group involved in each of the tasks

Group (Team)		Visual-only input (Jigsaw V)	Textual-only input (Jigsaw T)	Visual & Textual input (Jigsaw VT)
Group 1	Team A	4	3	4
	Team B	4	3	4
Group 2	Team A	4	4	4
	Team B	4	4	4

^a S1, S2, S3, S4 = student 1, student 2, student 3, and student 4.

3.2. Materials

The material was based on a four-frame cartoon in *The Wonderful World of Sazae-san* (hereafter *Sazae-san*) by Hasegawa (2004). The original cartoon was processed in the way that the three different input types include the same amount of information (see Appendix).

3.3. Procedures

All the jigsaw tasks (Jigsaw V, Jigsaw T, and Jigsaw VT) were carried out along the same procedures. The procedures can be largely divided into two sections according to the two goals shown in Figure 1.

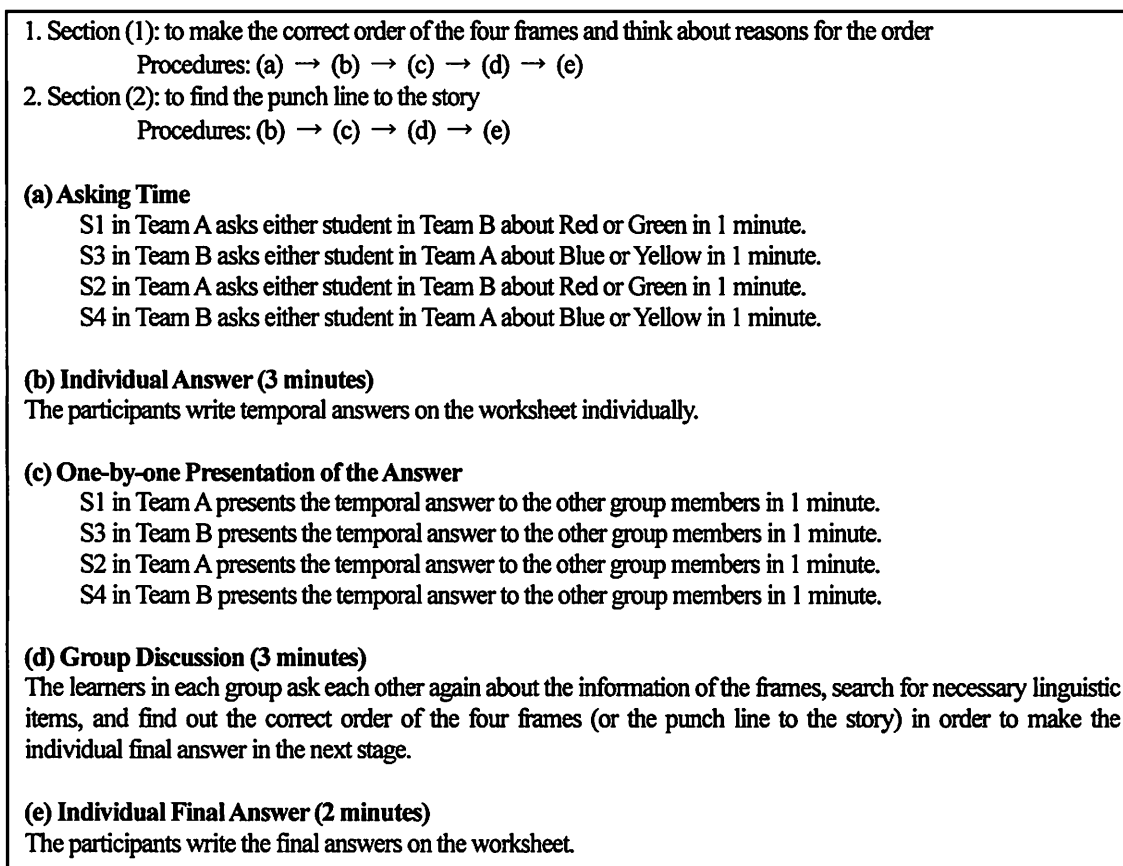


Figure 1: Jigsaw task procedures in the present study

3.3.1. Jigsaw task procedures to facilitate the Japanese learners' interaction

The task procedures were rigidly devised in consideration of the Japanese context, where expressing oneself in front of others may often be taken as immoderate or selfish, and therefore initiating conversation can sometimes be hesitated (Gray & Leather, 1999). This contextual characteristic is seen even when learners are working in small groups, though group work has generally been found effective in prompting interaction among learners (Long & Porter, 1985; Varonis & Gass, 1985). Indeed, in a pilot jigsaw task using another cartoon of *Sazae-san*, only predominant learners spoke a lot and others did not question each other in a group. Therefore, to push every learner to initiate asking each other and express oneself, the author devised Asking Time and One-by-one Presentation of the Answer before Group Discussion.

3. 4. Research Questions

1. In a jigsaw task, how do three input types influence learners' interaction when they exchange information?
2. In a jigsaw task, how do three input types influence learners' language production when they exchange information?
3. In subsequent task stages after information exchange in a jigsaw task, how do three input types influence learners' interaction?

To answer these three research questions, the interaction among the learners was audio-recorded, videotaped, and then transcribed.

3. 5. Results and Discussion

3. 5. 1. In Response to Research Question 1: Interactional Features in Asking Time (Information Exchange)

To answer the first research question, the information-exchange interaction at the first stage of the task procedure, (a) Asking Time, was coded according to the six interactional features shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Interactional features in Asking Time (information-exchange interaction)

Interactional features	Jigsaw V		Jigsaw T		Jigsaw VT	
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2
Listeners' (information receivers')						
Clarification requests	1	0	3	2	0	2
Confirmation checks	0	2	2	2	1	2
Speakers' (information givers')						
Responses through modification	0	2	0	0	0	0
Responses through repetition	1	0	4	3	1	2
Voluntary repetitions	3	0	7	8	1	0
Noticing a hole	0	4	0	0	0	1

3. 5. 1. 1. Jigsaw T learners' dictation work

The listeners' clarification requests, confirmation checks, speakers' responses through repetition, and speakers' voluntary repetitions were most frequently observed in Jigsaw T learners. They may have been concerned with dictating the textual input to the listeners. The listeners asked the speakers many times in order to take exact notes, and the speakers answered them by repeating their speech or they voluntarily repeated part of their speech each time they found the listeners unable to take quick and exact notes.

3. 5. 1. 2. The possibility of negotiation of meaning among Jigsaw T learners

The textual input given to Jigsaw T (and Jigsaw VT) learners was designed to tell the same amount of information as the visual input, which resulted in too simplified text to the university students. Such reduced input may not involve negotiation of meaning (Long, 1983). Then, it was necessary for the textual input to include vocabulary items or grammatical structures that either the speakers or listeners would not know at all or partially.

3. 5. 1. 3. Jigsaw V and Jigsaw VT learners' negotiation of meaning?

The four interactional features most frequently observed among Jigsaw T learners were also seen in Jigsaw V and Jigsaw VT learners. However, they, similar to Jigsaw T learners, did not seem to be negotiating the message meaning. Rather, they seemed to be just ascertaining what they heard from the speakers.

3. 5. 1. 4. The possibility of negotiation of meaning among Jigsaw V and Jigsaw VT learners

Although the listeners' clarification requests and confirmation checks did not seem to be negotiating meaning, these signals could have directed the speakers' attention to their original speech and triggered the modification of it, as two occurrences of speakers' modification were observed among Jigsaw V learners. However, the learners needed much more time to more focus on the form of the speakers' speech after they modified the original speech.

3. 5. 2. In Response to Research Question 2: Noticing A Hole in Language Production

The second research question was how the difference of jigsaw task input types influence learners' language production when they exchange information. To answer this question, the speakers' language production is analyzed in terms of noticing a hole.

Noticing a hole is maintained in the Output Hypothesis as one of the three functions output has (Swain, 1995, 1998, 2000). It claims that output stimulates learners to shift from open-ended semantic processing of input to complete syntactic encoding. This processing directs learners to discover what they cannot do (a hole) and subsequently attend to future ideal input to fill the hole. Therefore, noticing a hole triggered by output is an important step toward language development.

The present study has so far identified the occurrences of noticing a hole when the learners overtly substituted what they could not say with their corresponding first language. Although it is impossible to clearly identify further occurrences of the speakers' noticing a hole, from now on, the author attempts to explore further possibility of it. To do this, the speakers' language production in Asking Time is analyzed in the following two sections.

3. 5. 2. 1. *Exploring further possibility of noticing a hole (1): the percentage of the speakers' own words in their production, and complexity of the production*

Table 3 shows how much the speakers relied on their own language resources and how much the complexity of the production was.

Throughout Jigsaw V and Jigsaw T learners, the higher the percentage of the speakers' own words in their production becomes, the lower the complexity of the production becomes.

Table 3
The percentage of the speakers' (information givers') own words in the total number of words they produced in Asking Time and complexity of the production

Frame	Jigsaw V				Jigsaw T				Jigsaw VT			
	Group 1		Group 2		Group 1		Group 2		Group 1		Group 2	
	O.W. ^a	Com. ^b	O.W.	Com.	O.W.	Com.	O.W.	Com.	O.W.	Com.	O.W.	Com.
Red	100% 17/17	4.3	100% 7/7	3.5	0% 0/21	7.0	0% 0/26	8.7	17.2% 5/29	9.7	0% 0/15	5.0
Yellow	100% 10/10	5.0	100% 29(31) /29(31)	5.6 (5.8)	0% 0/25	8.3	0% 0/25	8.3	47.1% 8/17	4.3	0% 0/25	8.3
Green	100% 17/17	4.3	100% 10(11) /10(11)	10.0 (11.0)	0% 0/20	6.7	0% 0/20	6.7	39.1% 9/23	11.5	63.0% (66.7%) 5(6)/8(9)	2.3 (2.7)
Blue	100% 31/31	5.0	100% 22(23) /22(23)	6.3 (6.7)	5.6% 1/18	9.0	0% 0/18	9.0	50.0% 9/18	9.0	38.5% 5/13	6.5
Mean	100% 18.8/18.8	4.7	100% 17(18) /17(18)	6.4 (6.8)	1.4% 0.3/21	7.8	0% 0/22.3	8.2	38.4% 7.8/21.8	8.6	25.4% (26.3%) 2.5(2.8) /15.3(15.5)	5.5 (5.6)

^a O.W. = Own words, meaning the percentage of the information givers' own words in the total number of words they produced

^b Com. = Complexity measured by the total number of words per AS-unit (i.e. an utterance consisting of an independent clause and any subordinate clause(s), or sub-clausal unit and any subordinate clause(s) (Foster, Tonkyn, & Wigglesworth (2000))

Note: The numbers in the parentheses under the column of O. W. indicate the number of words including the learners' native language words which were substituted for what they could not say in the target language but which were still incorporated in the target language syntax. The numbers in the parentheses under the column of Com. indicate the complexity taking into account the number of the learners' native language words used within the target language syntax.

This correlation is not entirely applied to Jigsaw VT learners; some of them used their own words and still got higher complexity than Jigsaw T learners, and others of them used smaller percentage of their own words and got lower complexity than Jigsaw V learners. Then, the production by Jigsaw VT learners can be categorized into three types: Jigsaw V-like production (by one Jigsaw VT learner in Group 1 describing Yellow frame and two Jigsaw VT learners in Group 2 describing Green frame and Blue frame), Jigsaw T-like production (by two Jigsaw VT learners in Group 2 describing Red frame and Yellow frame), and the production peculiar to Jigsaw VT learners (by the other three Jigsaw VT learners in Group 1 describing Red frame, Green frame, and Blue frame). Of these three types, Jigsaw V-like

Jigsaw VT learners could have been given the further possibility of noticing a hole. It is assumed that they used their own words at the risk of low complexity, as Jigsaw V learners did, attempting to say things challenging for them. Then, they might have the chance to notice what they could not say.

3. 5. 2. 2. *Exploring further possibility of noticing a hole (2): the speakers' dysfluency*

The further possibility of the speakers' noticing a hole is now explored by finding their dysfluent phenomena, such as false starts, repetitions (Foster, Tonkyn, & Wigglesworth, 2000), reformulations, and replacements (Skehan & Foster, 1999).

Table 4 shows how many dysfluencies the speakers (information givers) made in describing the

Table 4
The number of information givers' dysfluencies in Asking Time

Dysfluency	Jigsaw V		Jigsaw T		Jigsaw VT	
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2
False starts	3	2	0	3	0	0
Repetitions	5	5	0	0	0	2
Reformulations	3	3	0	1	1	1
Replacements	2	3 (4)	0	0	0	1
Total	13	13 (14)	0	4	1	4

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of dysfluencies including those incidences in which learners substituted their native language words for what they could not say in the target language but still kept the target language syntax.

frames in Asking Time. In total, Jigsaw V learners made the most dysfluent phenomena. Jigsaw T and Jigsaw VT learners showed a similar total number of dysfluent phenomena.

Jigsaw T learners almost entirely copied the textual input in describing the frames, and all their dysfluent utterances were made by the failure to read the input correctly.

On the other hand, Jigsaw V and Jigsaw VT learners had the opportunity to use their own existing language knowledge, and it is possible that they noticed their own language problems while making the dysfluent speech. Jigsaw V learners made false starts by reformulating the utterance that was begun. Repetitions were observed in both Jigsaw V and Jigsaw VT learners, commonly in planning what to speak next. Reformulations by Jigsaw V and Jigsaw VT learners were common to produce more accurate form of the target language. Replacements were particularly observed among Jigsaw V learners. They made replacements to describe the content of the visual input with more details as well as to produce a more accurate form of the target language.

The present study cannot tell if there were moments when the learners realized they could not say what they wanted to say. However, if such moments appeared to be their dysfluent phenomena, the

analysis carried out here could imply further occurrences of the speakers' noticing a hole.

3. 5. 3. *In Response to Research Question 3: Interaction at Later Task Stages*

The third research question asked how the difference in jigsaw task input types influence learners' interaction after the first task stage of information exchange. The later jigsaw task stages are the two discussion stages indicated in Figure 1 as (1)(d) Group Discussion about the order of the frames and reasons for it, and as (2)(d) Group Discussion about the punch line to the story. These two different discussion stages are together analyzed from the following perspectives: (1) the amount of information successfully communicated in each group at the first task stage (Asking Time); (2) the contents the learners were discussing at the two subsequent discussion stages.

3. 5. 3. 1. *The amount of information successfully communicated in Asking Time*

The amount of information was measured by the following way: (1) the English text given to Jigsaw T learners was divided into 19 segments; (2) the author counted how many of the 19 pieces of information were included in the transcriptions of the learners' interaction in Asking Time and the memos the listeners took during the interaction.

As shown in Table 5, Jigsaw T learners communicated with each other the largest amount of and almost all of the information about the four frames, followed by Jigsaw VT learners, and then Jigsaw V

Table 5

The amount of information successfully communicated among the learners at the first task stage of Asking Time

	Jigsaw V		Jigsaw T		Jigsaw VT	
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2
The amount of information successfully communicated	11 / 19	9 / 19	18 / 19	19 / 19	16 / 19	13 / 19

learners.

3. 5. 3. 2. *Contents of interaction in later jigsaw task stages: Jigsaw V and Jigsaw VT learners*

Failing to communicate some information in Asking Time, Jigsaw V and Jigsaw VT learners needed to discuss the missing information. Then, allowed to talk more freely than in Asking Time, the learners exchanged information in the first language. Thus, Jigsaw V and Jigsaw VT learners, who might had been provided with the opportunities of negotiation of meaning and noticing a hole in Asking Time, seemed to have little learning opportunity in the later discussion stages.

3. 5. 3. 3. *Contents of interaction in later jigsaw task stages: Jigsaw T learners*

With the textual input, Jigsaw T learners could easily share almost all the information about the four

frames in Asking Time, and with the shared information, they could smoothly proceed to the later discussions. In the discussions, they focused on the target language form to use at the next task stage (i.e. (e) Individual Final Answer). In this meta-language talk, or a language-related episode (LRE) (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 1998), Jigsaw T learners hypothesized the target language, corrected the other members' language hypotheses, or suggested alternative hypotheses.

These Jigsaw T learners showing the LREs would be provided with a further opportunity of language development. As a consequence of the meta-talk in the group, they made hypothesis testing as a group. This hypothesis could have been proved or denied through the feedback by a native-speaker or by a teacher. Thus, Jigsaw T learners, who seemed to have almost no opportunity of negotiation of meaning and noticing a hole in Asking Time, have another learning opportunity of LREs at the later task stages.

4. CONCLUSION

The present research has investigated how different input types affect learners' interaction in a jigsaw task, and suggested that different input types in a jigsaw task engage the learners in different kinds of language learning at different task stages. The learners with visual input could have had the opportunities of negotiation of meaning and noticing a hole at the first information-exchange stage. The learners with textual input, on the other hand, focused on the language form to use for the task outcome at the later task stages of group discussion.

Although the present study ended up just assuming some possible learning opportunities, it might give a further consideration about what kinds of task design or feedback are necessary.

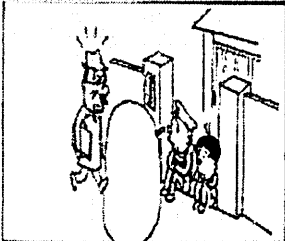
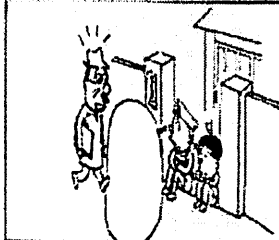
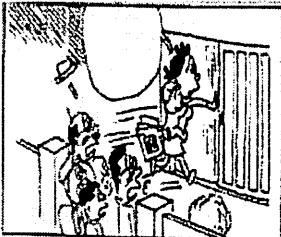
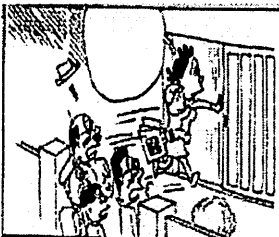
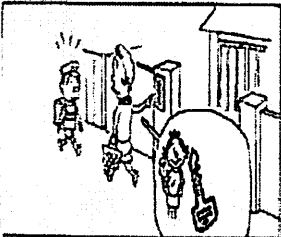
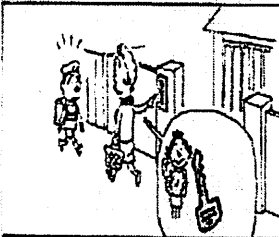
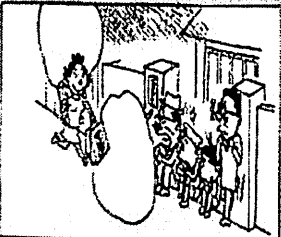
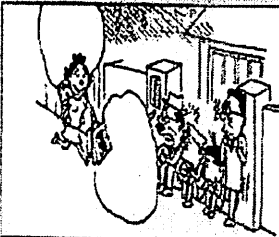
Involving learners in a jigsaw task with visual input, the teacher should consider how the task could trigger not only negotiation of meaning or noticing a hole but also the learners' cognitive comparison of the form negotiated or noticed and the ideal one. Intentional feedback in which the target form is salient may be one of facilitative teacher interventions (Nobuyoshi & Ellis, 1993). Involving students in a jigsaw task with textual input, on the other hand, the teacher can include particular unknown linguistic items in the input to be exchanged among the students. Such new items should be carefully chosen and incorporated into the input so that it meets the students' needs and level of competence. These things need to be taken into account and implemented in second language classrooms.

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Frame holder	Name of frame (Order)	Visual-only input for Jigsaw V groups	Textual-only input for Jigsaw T groups	Visual and textual input for Jigsaw VT groups
Team A (Students 1 & 2)	Yellow (2nd)		Katsuo and Wakame are sitting in front of the house. Namihei comes home. He looks surprised to see them sitting in front of the house.	 Katsuo and Wakame are sitting in front of the house. Namihei comes home. He looks surprised to see them sitting in front of the house.
	Blue (4th)		Sazae opens the front door of the house. Namihei, Katsuo, Wakame, and Masuo are surprised to see that.	 Sazae opens the front door of the house. Namihei, Katsuo, Wakame, and Masuo are surprised to see that.
Team B (Students 3 & 4)	Red (1st)		Katsuo comes home from school. A woman is walking in front of his house. The woman tells Katsuo that Sazae locked the door and went out.	 Katsuo comes home from school. A woman is walking in front of his house. The woman tells Katsuo that Sazae locked the door and went out.
	Green (3rd)		That night, Sazae comes running back home. Namihei, Katsuo, Wakame, and Masuo are waiting outside the house. They look angry.	 That night, Sazae comes running back home. Namihei, Katsuo, Wakame, and Masuo are waiting outside the house. They look angry.

Debate as a Task: From Perspectives of Negotiation of Meaning, Communication Strategies, and Strategic Competence

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Introduction

This study has investigated interaction among students in a debate activity to examine the effects of debate as a communicative activity on students' interaction. Especially, the present study compared four debate activities and analyzed interactions in these activities in terms of negotiation of meaning and the use of communication strategies (CSs) that are considered to facilitate interaction. By comparing and analyzing interaction in these debate activities, this study tried to offer effectiveness of the debate activity in language classroom.

Negotiation of meaning

One of the researchers who investigate a role of interaction in SLA is Long. He suggests the "Interaction Hypothesis" in his research (1996). The Interaction Hypothesis is defined by him as follows:

"negotiation for meaning, especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the NS or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways" (1996: 451-452).

Input, especially comprehensible input is recognized as an important factor in SLA. Comprehensible input appears to be generated from opportunities for negotiation for meaning. Negotiation for meaning which is considered as one factor in causing acquisition is defined by Long as follows: "process in which, in an effort to communicate, learners and competent speakers provide and interpret signals of their own and their interlocutor's perceived comprehension, thus provoking adjustments to linguistic form, conversational structure, message content, or all three, until an acceptable level of understanding is achieved" (Long 1996: 418). According to Ellis (1994), this negotiation work is defined in terms of negotiation of meaning. Negotiation of meaning is work that a L2 learner or an interlocutor attempts to remedy problems in understanding.

Negotiation of meaning is triggered by interaction adjustments. Interaction adjustments

are devices employed in the negotiation that “are used both strategically, to avoid conversational trouble, and tactically, to repair communication breakdowns when they occur” (Long, 1996). As examples of interaction adjustments, he shows the following devices: repetitions, confirmations, reformulations, comprehension checks, confirmation checks, clarification requests.

Communication Strategies

One way that enables learners to continue their interaction is communication strategies (CSs). These strategies are used when communication breakdowns occur. Communication breakdowns cause a problem that interaction discontinues. A solution to overcome this problem is the use of CSs.

From the perspective of interaction, Tarone (1980) defines CSs as “a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared. (Meaning structures include both linguistic and sociolinguistic structures.)” (420).

Her three criteria are as follows:

1. A speaker desires to communicate a meaning X to a listener.
2. The speaker believes the linguistic or sociolinguistic structure desired to communicate meaning X is not unavailable or is not shared with the listener.
3. The speaker chooses to:
 - a. avoid- not attempt to communicate meaning X or
 - b. attempt alternate means to communicate meaning X. The speaker stops trying alternatives when it seems clear to the speaker that there is shared meaning.

Key concepts when we consider Tarone’s definition of CSs are that both a speaker and an interlocutor are eager to share the speaker’s intended meaning and that they attempt to accomplish sharing of the meaning jointly.

Strategic Competence

A competence which relates to CSs is strategic competence. Strategic competence is one component of communicative language ability. Bachman and Palmer (1996) describe communicative language ability in a framework of test design. According to them, communicative language ability consists of two parts: language knowledge and strategic competence. They define strategic competence as “a set of metacognitive components, or strategies, which can be thought of as higher order executive processes that provide a cognitive

management function in language use, as well as in other cognitive activities” (Bachman and Palmer, 1996, p. 70). They indicate three areas in which metacognitive components operate: goal setting, assessment, and planning.

These three areas of metacognitive strategy use include CSs, the planning phase, defined by Faerch and Kasper (1983). From this point, CSs are triggered by strategic competence which is one component of communicative language ability.

Debate Activity

The previous section discussed the role of interaction in SLA and two factors which seem to contribute to promoting learners’ interaction: negotiation of meaning and the use of CSs. Then, we have to discuss a way which enables utilizing the use of CSs and intervention to promote learners’ interaction.

In a classroom setting, it is beneficial to set up activities which require learners to interact with others. A number of these activities have been designed and introduced in language classroom, e.g., games, role play, and project works (Koyanagi, 2004). Among these activities, this study selects debate as an activity which requires interaction among learners. In this paper, we call debate a “debate activity” to distinguish it from debate which is recognized generally. This study pays attention to characteristics of debate as an activity which promote learners’ interaction rather than a game which puts an emphasis on victory or defeat.

Many researchers study on tasks which are activities designed to promote learners’ SLA. Nunan defines a task as follows:

“a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning rather than to manipulate form” (Nunan, 2004, p. 4)

Ellis (2003) considers the effect of task features on interaction from perspectives of six task features: (1) required vs. optional information exchange, (2) types of required information exchange, (3) expected task outcome, (4) a topic, (5) discourse domain, and (6) cognitive complexity.

The first feature which should be considered is whether information exchange is required or optional. Required information exchange refers to the one that “learners cannot complete the task unless they exchange the information” (Ellis, 2003, p. 86). Ellis categorizes information gap tasks as tasks which require information exchange, and opinion exchange tasks as tasks

where information exchange is optional. According to him, information gap tasks provide learners with more opportunities of negotiation work than opinion gap tasks. Debate is categorized into opinion gap tasks that have less effect on interaction than information gap task. However, this study suggests that debate has a characteristic which requires learners to exchange information. In debate activities, learners are divided into two positions: an affirmative position or a negative position to a given topic. And they are supposed to convince others of their opinions by rebutting the other side's opinions. To rebut the other sides' opinions, learners have to exchange their opinion, that is, information. From this point of view, it is interpreted that debate has the characteristic of required information exchange task which promote learners' interaction.

The next dimension which receives attention is whether a task is categorized as a one-way task or two-way task. In a one-way task, a single person holds information which is to be shared to complete the task, while in a two-way task information is held between two or more people. Many studies claim that a two-way task produces more negotiation work than a one-way task. This study categorizes debate as a two-way task because in the task both learners from an affirmative side and learners from a negative side hold different information.

The third point to be considered is a distinction of task outcome: open tasks or closed tasks. Open tasks are tasks where there is no predetermined solutions. Opinion gap tasks, such as making choices, surveys, debate, or discussion are open tasks. On the other hand, closed tasks have a single, correct solution that learners need to reach to complete the task. Information gap tasks are closed tasks in nature. Ellis suggests that closed tasks result in more negotiation than open tasks and closed tasks are more likely to promote acquisition. However, he also points out that "it is worth bearing in mind that closed tasks may be less beneficial if other aspects of discourse that may be important for acquisition, for example, the opportunity to produce long turns, are considered" (Ellis, 2003, p. 91).

The fourth feature of tasks is a topic. Topics of tasks also impact on learners' interaction. Studies on topics of tasks indicate that topic familiarity and topic importance influence on learners' interaction resulting from the task. According to these studies, it is suggested that the more familiar and important a topic is to learners, the more interaction occurs. Topics differ with regard to the kind of information that needed to be exchanged: human-ethical and objective-spatial. A human-ethical topic promotes interaction among learners. To set up a topic of the task by considering both topic familiarity and topic importance is a crucial point for all tasks. Therefore, if a topic of debate is familiar and important to learners, learners'

interaction in the task may be promoted. When teachers design a debate activity, they should set up a topic which is more familiar and more important to learners.

The fifth feature of tasks is a discourse mode. A discourse mode is likely to be an important dimension of tasks. Ellis mentions that “the discourse mode associated with a task will affect the extent to which participants modify their input and output in negotiation exchange” (Ellis, 2003, p. 93). Ellis reports two studies of effects of a discourse mode on interaction. One study suggests that a task that involves collaborative exchange such as a free discussion task results in more meaning negotiation than a task of which discourse mode is expository. The other study suggests that a task where discourse mode is narrative elicits more meaning negotiation than the task of which discourse mode is object description. A discourse mode of a debate activity in the present study is categorized as narrative and collaborative modes. These discourse modes have a positive impact on interaction. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that debate has a positive influence on interaction.

This paper discusses cognitive complexity of tasks as the final point to be considered. Context-dependency is regarded as a major factor which determines cognitive complexity. Tasks which are context-free, i.e., without any information from a situation, promote more meaning negotiation than context-embedded tasks. This characteristic requires learners to interact with others by using a large amount of information to compensate for lack of information from context. Cognitively demanding tasks would be those that require learners to use language. Debate is categorized into tasks which are context-free because in the task learners are supposed to exchange opinions on a given topic without considering a situation where learners are. Since debate is a context-free task, it requires learners to express their opinions by using much linguistic information. From these points of view, this study suggests that debate is categorized as a cognitive demanding task which promotes interaction. However, Ellis states that “if a task is too challenging, it may cause learners to simply give up!” (Ellis, 2003, p. 95). Although many studies suggest that cognitively demanding tasks promote more meaning negotiation than cognitively undemanding tasks, an issue of what degree of cognitive complexity works best still remains unclear. This study suggests that the debate activity will be the task which promotes learners’ interaction because it includes several dimensions which positively influences on interaction.

Next, this study discusses another characteristic which is worthy of remark from a perspective of intervention. In addition to the features of the debate activity that are likely to provoke negotiation of meaning among learners, the debate activity has another advantage.

The advantage is that the format of the activity provides teachers with a chance to intervene in learners' interaction. One characteristic of the debate activity which differs from the other opinion exchange tasks is that debate has a format in common. An example format of debate for pedagogical use in English language teaching is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

One basic format of debate (Based on Shiozawa, 2002)

Steps	Speech Sessions	Speakers
1	Constructive speech session	a. A speaker from an affirmative side b. A speaker from a negative side
2	Discussion	
3	Rebuttal speech session	c. A speaker from the affirmative side d. A speaker from the negative side e. A speaker from the affirmative side f. A speaker from the negative side
4	Summary speech session	g. A speaker from the negative side h. A speaker from the affirmative side

Debate proceeds by following this format. According to Table 1, it is obvious that each speaker is designated a part where they express their opinions. After each part, there is a space which enables a third person to intervene.

From this point of view, this study suggests that the format of the debate activity provides teachers with opportunities to give learners feedback and to assist learners in producing their utterance by intervening in their interaction.

Devices which Enhance the Positive Features of Debate Activity

This subsection discusses two ways that facilitate learners' interaction in the debate activity. When teachers design a lesson which involves the debate activity, they need to consider some devices to facilitate learners' interaction in the activity. This paper, considers especially two points: effectiveness of group size and the need of preparation for the debate activity.

First, this study explains effectiveness of interaction in a small group work from a perspective of the Interaction Hypothesis. Group work is often considered as an essential feature of communicative language teaching. According to Ellis (1994), group work increases

opportunities to use language, improves the quality of learner talk, promotes a positive affective climate, and motivates learners to learn. Furthermore, it provides much input and opportunities for output that are supposed to promote acquisition.

Ellis indicates that “interaction between learners can provide the interactional conditions which have been hypothesized to facilitate acquisition more readily than can interaction involving teachers” (Ellis, 1994, p. 599). Therefore, interaction in a small group is highly likely to be beneficial to learners because a small group offers them more opportunities to speak for negotiation of meaning. From the perspective of the Interaction Hypothesis, interaction in a small group work may help acquisition.

Then, this subsection will explain the other factor which helps to promote interaction: effectiveness of a pre-task phase. When teachers design a lesson which contains an activity, they need to consider stages or components of the lesson. Although many kinds of task designs have been proposed, these designs have three principal phases in common: a pre-task phase, a during-task phase, and a post-task phase.

Among these phases, a during-task phase refers to central and obligatory tasks when teachers design a lesson. In this study, the debate activity is a during-task phase. On the other hand, a pre-task phase and post-task phase are non-obligatory phases.

Although a pre-task phase and post-task phase are non-obligatory ones, these task phases serve a crucial role in ensuring that the task performance is maximally effective for language development (Ellis, 2003). Especially, it is highly possible that a pre-task phase influence learners’ performance in the task.

This subsection discusses a pre-task phase by focusing on its effect on learners’ interaction in the task. The purpose of this pre-task phase is “to prepare students to perform the task in ways that will promote acquisition” (Ellis, 2003, p. 244). When learners work on an activity, they have to pay attention to meaning, linguistic forms, and production at the same time. That causes high cognitive demands on learners and it may prevent interaction in the task. However, by setting up the pre-task phase, it is possible that teachers reduce the demand on learners which may prevent learners’ interaction.

Ellis (2003) shows four ways that can be conducted in a pre-task phase to reach its purpose. These ways are (1) performing a similar task, (2) providing a model, (3) non-task preparation activities, and (4) strategic planning. The first way is designed to support learners in performing a task similar to the task they will perform in the during-task phase of the lesson. Another way is providing a model. This way asks learners to observe a model of how to

perform the task. The third way is engaging learners in non-preparation activities which are designed to prepare them to perform the task. To reduce cognitive or linguistic demands placed on learners is the focus of these activities. Brainstorming or mind maps are examples of these activities. The fourth way that Ellis shows is strategic planning. In this way, learners are given time to plan how they will perform the task. Strategic planning involves learners in considering the linguistic forms they will need to execute in the task.

From the perspective of the Interaction Hypothesis, the debate activity has characteristics which affect learners' interaction positively. In addition to the effect of characteristics itself, the teacher should combine some devices into a lesson which involves the activity to maximize positive features of the debate activity on interaction.

The Study

To examine the effects of the debate activity, this study designed two different styles of debate activity: students only debate activities (Sonly) and debate activities with more proficient users of a target language (S+mpu). Interactions among students in these debate activities were compared and analyzed by focusing on the use of CSs and intervention.

This study asked 32 first-year students of Akita University to participate in a debate activity that the author designed as an experiment for this study. They were divided into four debate groups: Debate groups 1, 2, 3, and 4. The English proficiency levels of these groups were regarded as equal based on the F-test.

Two more proficient users of English participated in Debate groups 3 and 4 and intervened in students' interaction. One was a post graduate student of Akita University who majors English education: the author of this study. The other was a professor of English education of Akita University.

Data were collected by means of three methods: transcription of dialogue of students in debate activities, student interview, and student questionnaire. The transcription of dialogue of students was arranged as a primary data analysis. The student interview and student questionnaire were conducted as secondary data.

Results and Discussion

This study had four major findings. First, this study found that students used seven kinds of CSs to continue their interaction in the debate activity: approximation, circumlocution, literal translation, language switch, appeal for assistance, mime, and message abandonment. Among

these CSs, approximation, circumlocution, and appeal for assistance seemed to encourage students to continue their interaction in English. Approximation and circumlocution were ways to convey students' intended meaning by using their interlanguage and appeal for assistance, especially in English, tended to prompt circumlocution. On the other hand, language translation and language switch prevent students' interaction in English. These two CSs depend on student's L1 knowledge and students tended to use these CSs in Japanese. These CSs deprive them of chances to elaborate their utterances in a second language.

The second point that this study found indicates that there was a relationship between the use of CSs and interaction. By comparing the interactions in Debate 1 and Debate 2 with the ones in Debate 3 and Debate 4, it is clear that the total speaking time of Debate 3 and Debate 4 were longer than that of Debate 1 and Debate 2. In addition, the students in Debate 3 and Debate 4 used more words than the students in Debate 1 and Debate 2. On the other hand, as for speech rate, the average speech rate of Debate 1 and Debate 2 was higher than that of Debate 3 and Debate 4. It means that the students in Debate 1 and Debate 2 uttered more words per minute than the students in Debate 3 and Debate 4. This lower speech rate of Debate 3 and Debate 4 may result from the use of CSs. Since it required the students of unprepared interactions, it was difficult for them to express opinions in English instantly and fluently because of a high cognitive demand.

The third finding of this study was influence of more proficient users' intervention. This study set up two different styles of debate activities: Sonly and S+mpu. The comparison of interactions between these two styles of debate activities revealed several differences. In Sonly, students tended to ask for assistance in Japanese. While in S+mpu students tended to use much English words or expressions than students only debate activities. In Debate 4, which took place with a more proficient user, students did not use Japanese. As for characteristics of their interaction, more words were used in S+mpu than in Sonly. It must have resulted from the use of CSs which were encouraged by the more proficient user's intervention. Yet, as for speech rate, the average of S+mpu was lower than that of Sonly. This study may suggest that more proficient user's intervention caused this difference. Because of the intervention, more impromptu interactions among students occurred after each speech session in S+mpu. This unprepared interaction caused students cognitive demands that they had to think up an idea and make sentences to express their intended idea. This impromptu interaction led to a lower speech rate in S+mpu than that of Sonly, since the students took time to produce an utterance.

The final point that this study found was that there were differences in ways of solving a

communication breakdown. By comparing two types of debate activities, there were differences between them. In Sonly, the students tended to ask for clarification or repetition in Japanese to solve a communication breakdown. Interaction in Japanese could solve communication breakdowns easily than interaction in English, because intended meaning was conveyed more successfully in Japanese than in English. Another characteristic of Sonly was abandonment of solving a communication breakdown. These characteristics caused the students to lose opportunities to interact in English. On the other hand, in S+mpu, the students and more proficient users tried to solve communication breakdowns by adopting different ways from the way Sonly used. First, a more proficient user's intervention gave a chance of solving a communication breakdown to students by intervening in students' interaction. Second, the more proficient user's intervention was able to detect difficulties held by the students. The third, characteristic of the intervention was a function which reduces students' anxiety. However, although more proficient users' intervention seemed to give influence on solving a communication breakdown, not all communication breakdowns were solved even though a more proficient user joined the debate activity.

Conclusion

This study examines the effects of debate as a communicative activity on students' interaction by focusing on negotiation of meaning and the use of CSs. This study found that some CSs encouraged students to continue their interaction in English in the debate activities. Furthermore, the results of this study showed that more proficient users' intervention affected students' interaction in the debate activities.

In conclusion, this study indicates that the potential of a debate activity as a communicative activity which promotes students' interaction by adopting pedagogical supports such as instruction in CSs and intervention. Although this study investigated only four debate activities, this study implies that the results from the present experiment could give some suggestions to English teachers who are willing to make students interact with others communicatively in English classes.

To better understand the effects of debate activities, it is needed to observe debate activities in actual English classes constantly in future research. A continuous examination of the effects of the debate activity would strengthen the proposition that debate activities have potentials for promoting students' interaction in English classrooms.

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Empirical learning of second language acquisition for teacher development: What will task-based language learning suggest to prospective teachers of English?

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1. Tasks and teacher development

Tasks are potential for changing the present English language teaching in Japan into one that will further foster students' second language learning. According to Ellis (2003), tasks promote the cognitive processes by which language acquisition or development takes place. These cognitive processes are systematically described in a model of second language acquisition explicated by Gass and Selinker (2008). The model explains that the cognitive processes involved in second language acquisition occur dynamically and interactively from input to output by way of noticing, comprehending, intake, and integrating. In the presentation, task-based communication is interpreted as a medium to induce the students' cognitive processes for second language acquisition. It is employed in the author's semester courses, mainly taken by prospective teachers of English, and used to investigate how those students reflect on their own language learning and communication during and after the courses, and compare them with their language learning before their participation in the courses.

2. Theoretical background

The theoretical background to support this presentation consists of community involvement learning, sociocultural theory, cerebration, and reflective writing. The first two are related to language teaching methodology while the other two are cognitive aspects of language learning and teacher development. One of the methodological principles of my course projects derives from community involvement learning, which is intended to get learners to use the target language in the real world through interaction with speakers of the language in the learners' own community or elsewhere in the world. The course projects were conducted in the form of weekly communication sessions with assistant language teachers (ALTs) in the local community. The other principle of sociocultural theory leads the students to learn language first with others and then individually. Cognitive processing after experiential learning is essential. Cerebration is the activity used in community involvement learning (Ingram, Kono, O'Neill, & Sasaki, 2008), by which language learners reflect on their use of

language and their cross-cultural attitudes with the support of their teachers. Reflective writing is a cognitive method that is frequently and widely used for teacher education (Borg, 2006). Since it is also employed as a research tool for studying language teacher cognition, it will reveal how the project influences the students' beliefs about language learning and teaching.

3. Projects for prospective teachers

In this presentation, the 2007, 2008, 2009 course projects are introduced. Twelve to twenty students participated in a semester task-based communication project entitled "Intercultural Oral Communication Project (IOCP)" organised by the present author. They were mainly 2nd-year students who would like to become teachers of English after graduation. They were expected to consider language learning and teaching methods for their future teaching career through the IOCP.

4. IOCP task's potentials

Their reflective writing about language learning and communication in a target language revealed that the IOCP was taken as a good opportunity to think about second language acquisition. For those students who knew English grammar but could not use it well for actual communication, the impact of "using" English with native speakers of English to complete the project tasks seemed to be high. One student stated after the 7th of 8 IOCP sessions in the 2009 Semester 1, "Maybe there are some problems in the teaching of English. For example, I didn't practice speaking English with real English speakers. Through the IOCP, I strongly feel that language learners need to interact with real speakers."

Tasks are potential, at least to the present author, because they create social interaction, negotiation of meaning, authentic context, meaning focus, information gap, purposeful communication, connected spoken discourse, and cultural understanding by "using language."

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