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A Study of Language-Related Episodes in University English Group Discussion

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The present study aimed at understanding how English learners co-constructed their language experiences in small group interactions. In order to pursue the aim, language-related episodes (LREs), observed while six Korean university students were participating in English group discussion activities throughout one semester, were investigated. Under the framework of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind, the study tried to analyze students' dialogue qualitatively and identified LREs in small group discussion tasks. The results of the data analysis revealed that there were mainly three types of LREs: lexis-based, pronunciation-based, and grammar-based LREs. Along with the categorization of LREs, varied strategies such as projection, dictionary use, (self-)correction were demonstrated in the findings. Collaborative peer interactions and scaffoldings through LREs were commonly observed in group discussion activities, making a positive impact on expanding learner ZPDs. The detailed description of LREs was discussed in terms of the pedagogical values of small group discussion. Finally, implications of the study were provided at the end.

[language-related episodes/sociocultural theory/English group discussion]

I. INTRODUCTION

The role of interaction in language learning is undeniably indispensible (Gass, 1997; Long, 1985; 1996). Small group activity providing a context for natural interaction has long been utilized in language learning classrooms. However, there have been many

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interpretations among scholars regarding small group activity such as the nature of what interaction has brought into classroom, and its relevancy with language learning. It followed that varied studies have been made for a deeper understanding of small group activities from different theoretical perspectives of language and language learning: motivational theory (Slavin, 1993), cognitive constructivism (Piaget, 1926), sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), sociocognitive theory (Atkinson, 2010), complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008), and so on. Among them, Piaget (1926) maintained that socially arbitrary knowledge such as language, value, rules, morality, and symbol structure can be acquired only through interactions with others. Vygotsky (1978, p. 47) also emphasized the effects of collaborative activity on learning, saying "functions are constructed in the form of relationship between learners and then come to draw on the individual as mental functions."

Among the varied perspectives to understanding small group activity, there has been a growing interest among scholars in understanding how second language learning takes place through situated, moment-by-moment interactions of learners. Especially researchers from a sociocultural approach to language learning focus on the socially constructed nature of interaction and its impact on second language learning (Ohta, 2000; Lantolf & Appel, 1994). From the sociocultural perspective, learning has been seen as a process in which participants can transform the knowledge of the target language collaboratively constructed through group interactions.

Communicative interactions in the target language are a significant opportunity for learners to develop communicative language skills (Kasper, 2004; Swain, 1985; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). From Vygotsky's (1978) perspective, "children's thinking and meaning-making is socially constructed and emerges out of their social interactions with their environment" (Kaufman, 2004, pp. 303-319). In order to better understand the role of interaction in L2 development, researchers have studied how native learners collaborate with each other as they discuss the assigned language learning tasks in their classrooms.

One of the eminent researchers, Donato (1998), emphasized the importance of "collective scaffolding" for the learner's L2 development. In contrast to previous research findings, this study drew our attention to the fact that scaffolded help does not need to be created by the experts; it can be provided by the learners themselves. It is also important to note that the knowledge acquired during the scaffolded interaction among the learners was retained long after learning took place. At a later time, the participants could individually produce the linguistic forms that they previously could only produce with the scaffolded assistance of their peers.

Group participants in the interaction were found to adjust themselves to ensure a developmentally appropriate level of collaborative assistance (Ohta, 2000). This assistance

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was not provided by an expert or a teacher but by the students themselves. Given the study's unique insights into assistance among peers, more research is needed into the nature of effective assistance in peer learning situations. These findings support one of Vygotsky's fundamental claims: the individual's knowledge is socially and dialogically derived.

Drawing on the theoretical premises of sociocultural approach to learning, nowadays several studies have been conducted in Korea on how learners acquire their L2 knowledge through peer interactions (Cho, 2009; Hwang, 2010; Ryoo, 2009). Those studies all corroborated that learners acquire interactional competence, including the acquisition of vocabulary, structures, and pragmatics while working with others. Even though they have different English proficiency levels, learners can cooperate with each other to solve linguistic problems and also can develop the second language knowledge.

This present study investigates language-related episodes (LREs, hereafter) in group discussion activities under the theoretical premises of Vygotsky's sociocultural approach. The present study investigates various assistances for linguistic problems through LREs in university English group discussion activities.

To meet the study aim, the following research questions are formulated.

1. What are types of LREs found in peer-assisted group discussion?
2. How do learners interact (provide and receive assistance) with each other to co-construct the second language knowledge in their ZPD?

To answer the questions above, students' group discussions during the class were all recorded. LREs were identified and transcribed from dialogues and those were examined qualitatively. Through the qualitative analysis, the study identified various types of LREs limited within the scope of language aspects in group discussion. Then, the study continued to investigate how learners build up the second language knowledge with each other's scaffolding by analyzing LREs in Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Scaffolding & Peer Assistance

Wertsch (1979) described scaffolding as a dialogically produced inter-psychological process through which learners internalize knowledge they co-construct with more capable peers. Donato (1994) extends the scaffolding framework to peer interaction and

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suggests that learners can scaffold one another, or "mutually construct" assistance, in much the same way experts scaffold the performance of novices. As Donato goes on, "scaffolded performance is a dialogically constituted inter-psychological mechanism that promotes the novice's internalization of knowledge co-constructed in shared activity." (Donato, 1994, p. 41). The metaphor also implies that scaffolded help is not fixed but continually revised by the expert to accommodate the emerging abilities of the novice. The scaffolding mechanism is used to promote the novice's internalization of knowledge that has been co-constructed in a social activity.

Along with his study on scaffolding, Donato (1998) addressed the role of collective scaffolding in the acquisition of French. The findings of his study revealed that, contrary to the accepted view of scaffolded help, in which help is provided by a more capable individual such as an expert, parent, or an adult native speaker, learners at the same level of second or foreign language proficiency seem quite capable of providing guided support to one another. His findings also revealed that learners themselves can be a good source of L2 knowledge. Collectively constructed support provides not only the opportunity for input exchange among learners but also the opportunity to expand the learner's own knowledge.

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) stated that the metaphor of scaffolding has been developed in neo-Vygotskian discussions to capture the qualities of the type of other-regulation within the ZPD which is supposedly most facilitative of learning/ appropriation of new concepts. They provided evidence supporting the term of regulation and scaffolding. The mature, skilled individual is capable of autonomous functioning, that is of self-regulation. However, the child of the unskilled individual learns by carrying out tasks and activities under the guidance of other more skilled individuals (e.g. parents, teachers, other peers, etc.), initially through a process of other-regulation, typically mediated through language. That is, the child or the leaner is inducted into a shared consciousness through collaborative talk, until eventually they take over (or appropriate) new knowledge or skills into their own individual consciousness.

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) characterized scaffolded help as having the following functions: (1) recruiting interest in the task, (2) simplifying the task, (3) maintaining pursuit of the goal, (4) marking critical features and discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution, (5) controlling frustration during problem solving, (6) demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed. The following excerpt from Ellis (1985) illustrates a number of features of scaffolding. It is an example excerpt, followed by the description and interpretation of the scaffolding interaction.

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1. Teacher: I want you to tell me what you can see in the picture or what's wrong with the picture.
2. Learner: A /paik/ (=bike)
3. Teacher: A cycle, yes. But what's wrong?
4. Learner: /ret/ (=red)
5. Teacher: It's red yes. What's wrong with it?
6. Learner: Black.
7. Teacher: Black. Good. Black what?
8. Learner: Black /taes/ (=tire)

(Ellis, 1985, p. 78)

According to the excerpt, a teacher is showing a beginning leveled-learner a picture of a bicycle with no pedals. The teacher wants the learner to explain what is wrong with the bicycle, but clearly the teacher is unable to construct a ZPD to enable the learner to perform this function. The learner responds by performing a skill he has already developed (naming colors), perhaps in accordance with the goal of 'saying something about the picture.' The teacher finally accepts the learner's response in line 7 and encourages him to extend it. The learner then produces "black /taes/," which is the first two-word utterance he first tried throughout the entire conversation. This interaction shows the teacher simplifying the original task and controlling frustration by accepting the learners' contributions. Then the teacher provides idealized versions of the learner's one-word utterances, for example, "Red"—"It's red." Finally, the excerpt shows how the learner's final utterance is constructed with assistance of the teacher. The teacher's question, "Black what?" provides the learner with a frame that he uses to form his own utterance. In this way, the learner's final utterance can be said to be "co-constructed." In this example, then, the learner interacts with an expert—his teacher.

While engaging in scaffolding, the teacher is able to draw on his experience of communicating with a low-level proficiency learner to adjust the demands of the task and to scaffold the interaction so that a successful outcome is achieved. Clearly, when learners have the opportunity to perform tasks with skilled teachers (or peers) their opportunities for learning are maximized.

2. Language-Related Episodes (LREs)

A language-related episode (LRE) is defined as a discourse in which the learners talk or ask about language, or question, implicitly or explicitly, their own language use or that of others (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p. 326). In another LREs' study, Swain (1998) clarified the meaning of LREs. The term LREs in a discourse context refers to "segments

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of learner interaction in which learners either talk about or question their own or others' language use within the context of carrying out a given task in the L2" (Swain, 1998, pp. 64-81).

During LREs, learners attempt to make connections between the meaning, spelling, or pronunciation of a word, the choice of a grammatical inflection, word order, and other functions (Swain, 1998). LREs include five different instances in which learners may

1. question the meaning of a linguistic item
2. question the correctness of the spelling/pronunciation of a word
3. question the correctness of a grammatical form
4. implicitly or explicitly correct their own or another's usage of a word, form or structure.

(Swain, 1998, pp. 64-81)

In terms of the sociocultural theory, L2 studies examining learner's output have used the term "LREs," to identify the extent to which language learners address problematic features of the target language or to illustrate how learners help each other. According to Jackson (2001) and Swain and Lapkin (1998), early LREs studies in second language interactions have focused on different aspects of language such as pronunciation, meaning, and form and so on. Also they have explained the mental processes learners went through to solve particular linguistic problems. Compared to them, recent LREs have been studied within the sociocultural framework by many researchers (Foster & Ohta, 2005; Kim, 2008; Leeser, 2004; Ohta, 2000; Swain, 2000; Watanabe & Swain, 2007; Williams, 2001).

Specifically, Swain and Lapkin (1998) have found that the dialogue between two participants serves to focus attention and to offer alternatives. Through dialogue participants regulate each other's activities and their own, which includes instances of LREs. The dialogue, as a result, provides them both with opportunities to use the target language and opportunities to reflect on their current language use.

As well as a focus on the nature of LREs, classification of LREs has been tried from many aspects. Its first attempt was made from the linguistic aspects. However, some researchers interested in learners' interactions in LREs have been working for LREs classifications. The LREs include a wide range of discourse moves, including requests for assistance, negotiation sequences, feedback and so on (Williams, 2001).

Based on the Williams' former studies (1999, 2001), in the LREs analysis, there are some major types of interaction among learners:

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1. learner-initiated requests to the teacher about language
2. learner-initiated requests to another learner about language
3. learner-learner negotiation over a language item
4. learner-learner meta-talk
5. other-correction

(Williams, 2001, pp. 317-318)

Seen from above, some learners request for assistance by themselves, whereas others consist of learner's providing assistance to other LREs.

Leeser (2004) classified LREs, even including meta talk and the exact rules for expressions. Some researchers (Leeser, 2004; Poole, 2005; Swain & Lapkin, 2001; Williams, 1999) classified them based on the purpose of research, into vocabulary and grammar. The others classified them into vocabulary, grammar, spelling and so on (Storch, 2001; Toshiyo, 1996; Wigglesworth & Storch 2009).

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Participants

The study participants were selected from an English major elective course titled "Current English" with a size of 37 students. The class consisted of students with English major (25), double major (9), or non-English major (3) students. The aim of the class is to help students develop English proficiency related to current affairs and issues. Unlike traditional classes where reading and understanding text in the area of current issues are the main target for learning and instruction, the class intended to enhance students' listening and speaking abilities through English group discussion. In other words, the class led students to transform their passive knowledge acquired through reading into active one by asking them to tend to reception and production skills at the same time when working in groups.

For the purpose of the study, one group was selected as a focused one for an intensive analysis. The group under focus had five females and one male, all whose major is English. They all shared Korean as their mother tongue; however, they had different English proficiencies due to different years of study and levels. They participated in group discussion activities for 13 weeks of instruction. The following are the characteristics of the participating students.

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1) Nam: She has never studied abroad. She has a good command of English. However, it is quite difficult for her to express her own thinking and opinions.
2) Jeong: She has never studied abroad. She is the youngest in the group. She tries hard to express her own opinion and participates in an active manner.
3) Kim: Most of the time, she is shy about giving her opinion in English. She concentrates on class, but says little.
4) Oh: Recently she graduated from a college in Canada. She speaks not only really well, but also quite fast compared to the others in the group. She always actively participates in discussion and gives a lot of opinions.
5) Lee: He studied in England for a year. Although he is the only male student in the group, he does not feel shy and speaks quite well and also prepares well in advance for the reading articles.
6) Ji: She has never studied abroad. She has a good command of English, and also always tries hard to take part in discussion.

2. Class Procedure

The class met twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays. Each week a new topic was introduced; new learning material with a few articles and discussion questions prepared by the instructor was uploaded in the school e-learning system for students to access and print out for class use. The instructor played a role of a facilitator and help-provider throughout the class.

1. Monday class lasted only for 50 minutes, so the whole class hour was devoted to <Pre-reading Discussion>. This task consisting of 3-5 discussion questions was a warm-up step prior to starting reading newspaper articles in the following class. Those questions were to arouse students' interest and motivation in the field of a covered topic, so that students were freely exchange their ideas and views in a rather casual, social environment.
2. On a time schedule of 100 minutes, the first half of Wednesday class was assigned for understanding the given reading articles. Groups decided how to manage this task; some groups summarized each paragraph together while others took turns reading each paragraph out loud and tried to translate into Korean. Student preparedness all varied, which means that one or two students in each group studied articles in advance like looking up new words in the dictionary or making their own notes for the discussion questions. Students were encouraged to help one another when having a difficulty understanding a particular sentence or an expression. At the same time, they were also encouraged to keep uppermost in

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asking for teacher's help whenever possible.

3. After a short break, students started to work on questions in <Post-reading Discussion>, by which they were able to check their understanding of the core issues covered in the articles. Compared to the pre-reading discussions, students could well organize their thoughts and opinions because they have already built on the knowledge from the text. Each group kept records of their responses to each discussion question. When group work finished, students were led to class-level discussion for 20 minutes. Groups shared their responses and expanded their thoughts and opinions on the issue under teacher's guidance.

3. Data Collection & Coding

A researcher attended the class and participated in the group discussion as a member of the group that she tried to observe (nicknamed as Ji in participants section). First she introduced herself to her group as a graduate student working on her thesis and gained permission to work as a group member. She preferred the non-intrusive observation data collection method with two purposes in mind: the observed group members acted more naturally and tried to help with students' discussion process. She observed the group discussion activities for 2 months. During each lesson, all discussions were audio-recorded. Through repeated listening to recording, LREs were identified, transcribed and analyzed for a categorization of types of LREs. Analysis and data interpretations revealed various scaffoldings catered for linguistic problems among learners.

For data analysis, the entire data recorded from 13 sessions of small group discussion were reviewed first to look for significant interactional patterns and overall mechanisms. For the present study focusing on LREs, every part of the recorded interaction where the participants talked about the language they were producing was identified. When an LRE involved a language learning instance of new language items, the evidence of reuse of the items by the participants were sought for in later interactions. Once identified as an instance of LRE and the subsequent reuse of the language items, the segments were transcribed in detail using the transcription notations adopted from Jefferson (1979) and Spencer-Oatey (2000) (See Appendix).

IV. FINDINGS

The analysis of LREs in the present study shows various scaffolds categorized in the form of LREs and demonstrates how learners collaboratively assist each other's language

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learning in a group activity. Three types of LREs were identified and classified from student dialogue: Lexis-based LREs (L-LREs, hereafter), pronunciation-based LREs (P-LREs, hereafter), and grammar-based LREs (G-LREs, hereafter).

1. L-LREs

Lexis-based LREs were most commonly found in the group activity (about 62 percent of episodes), as in identifications of word meaning or word order, spell corrections, suggestions of a word and a usage of a phrase or sentence, etc. Excerpt 1 below revealed the way the learners learn second language knowledge through LREs, especially lexical knowledge. All learners cooperated with each other to solve a problem and also showed how the learners acquire the specific meanings of the words from peers' assistance.

Excerpt 1 (20120320-2 / 18:25)
Pre-reading discussion (Between Korea and Japan issue)

1 L3: Uhm:::,So:::, you say,( ) we have a history of Japan's coloni:::, (+)
2 L5: Yeah, Colonialism?
3 L3: Yes, Yes' but they ( ) don't ( ) *a proper* applys:::,
((L3 hesitates to say a word))
4 L5: Yeah?
5 L3: You know what I mean? ( )
6 L5: Dokdo? ( ) What did you say?
7 L4: *apology?*::: (+)
8 L3: Oh, I am sorry I have a broken English. (+)
9 LL: =hihihi'
10 L5: Ah, apology.. Japan doesn't say a proper apology to Korea, huh?

In line 1, mentioning something that happened between Korea and Japan before, L3 tried to say a specific word, "Colonialism" to express her own opinion. L5 promptly provided a proper word with a correct pronunciation, but L3 hurriedly moved on to complete another sentence in line 3. L3 seemed very vocal about the issue making several sentences, but most of the time she failed in making complete sentences because of her limited vocabulary as seen in lines 1 and 3. It's interesting to observe how L3 tried to elicit some help in the process of making several attempts to get her message across. In line 3, her comment tailed off with an incomplete word of "applys..", demonstrating her

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implicit way of asking for help from group members. However, L3 did not have any response, then in line 5 she changed her strategy to seek a proper form of word. In response to L3's more explicit way for assistance, L4 provided a suitable word in meaning with an appropriate understanding of L3. This was L4's first utterance in this discourse. It's easy to regard L4 as an inactive group participant, but L4's accurate scaffold proves his attentive participation. L5 finally wrapped up the discourse by saying the whole sentence again with a correct use of the specific word in focus.

Excerpt 2 showed that peers L5 and L4 tried to figure out what the learner (L3) wanted to express. It means that if a speaker has a lack of ability to express what the speaker wants to say, the other learners in a group can provide the speaker with proper assistance. According to Ohta's study (2001), a variety of methods of assistance for solving the language problems included the notion of a projection process, which was used in the learner-learner interaction. Projection is the process where the peer listener mentally maps along with the speaker's utterance in progress and moves to consider what may follow. Excerpt 1 demonstrated not only spelling corrections from peers but also "projection" process as a method of assistance.

Excerpt 2 (20120404 / 33:23)
Pre-discussion (Snowballing Tuition Fees)

11 L5: The question is, the recent tuition hike at school is legitimate? ( ) So in this sentence, "tuition hike" means:::, "increase?" or "increasing something?":::, ( )
12 L4: Well:::, highly increasing?
13 L5: Highly increasing? ( )
((L5 finds the right meaning of the word in a dictionary))
14 L5: the tuition fees raised sharply:::,
15 L4: Yes, yes.

In excerpt 2, no learners had the knowledge to figure out the exact meaning of the word "tuition hike." Learners had a difficulty understanding the meaning of the word "tuition hike." So between lines 13 and 14, L5 found the specific meaning of the word by using an electronic dictionary as a semiotic tool. In line 12, L4 already mentioned the "increasing" for the "hike", which was not good enough for L5. So L5 got more specific meaning "raised sharply" in the context through the dictionary. These affordances were commonly observed in group discussion when none of group members were quite

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sure about the meaning of the words found in the discussion question. Indirectly refusing the offer made by other members, L5 took a thorough grasp of the word through the use of the dictionary.

The affordance-seeking behavior through the dictionary was also highly encouraged by the instructor during article-reading. The excerpt corroborates Wertsch (1991)'s emphasis on the role of semiotic tools to mediate a development process of language learning in the sociocultural theory. If no one knows the specific meaning of the word or the sentence in a group, using the dictionary is a prevalent mediating tool to assist learners' learning in group discussion.

Excerpt 3 (20120404 / 52:00)
During-Reading (Snowballing Tuition Fees)

15 L6: And there are promises ( ) like pork barrels involving, only certain
16 regions, ( ) which can ( ) or must be broken,
17 L5: =pork barrels:::?
((L6 tries to translate this sentence))
18 L6: involving only certain regions, I don't know:::, I don't understand:::,
19 L4: What? Which one?
20 L5: ((pointing out the sentence on the paper)) Here.
21 L6: like pork barrels involving only certain regions:::'
22 L2: =involving only certain regions:::,
23 L5: =involving only certain regions:::,
24 L4: =Um::: involving:::,
25 L5: What does pork barrels mean?
26 L4: Um:::, in some kind of ( ) container:::,
27 L5: Container:::,
28 L4: When it comes to ( ) a wine barrel:::,
29 L5: Um, (+) Pork barrels,
((L5 is reading the meaning from an electronic dictionary))
((When learners speak something in Korean, the utterance is italicized in the discourse))
30 L5: *I found it ( ) in a dictionary:::, found it:::, "Pork barrels" has:::*
31 *a specific meaning, "Pork barrel Politics" is referring to spending*
32 *money that is intended to benefit constituents of a politician in*
33 *return for their political support, either in the form of campaign*

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34 *contributions or votes."*
35 L3: *It means::: the thing that people do to get many votes in the*
36 *election. for developing their community:::,*
37 L4: *Um:::, in the election, in order to get many votes:::, People want*
38 *to get more community budgets:::, only for getting many votes:::,*
39 *That kind of action,*
40 L3: =Ah'
41 L6: =Um:::
42 L4: So it is like a:::, when we feed the pigs, the pigs gather
43 immediately:::, "Pork barrel" is really similar with this thing:::,
44 LL: =Ah:::'

In excerpt 3, "Pork barrel" is discussed in the text on a political issue. L6 translated the text into Korean in line 15; however, it does not seem as if she understood quite well the sentence. Even though L6 tried to translate the sentence, she failed. Then L6 just said that "I don't know…, I don't understand…." In line 18, L6 sought a direct help from the other members. This showcases one of the goals of LREs demonstrated by Williams (2001). Williams suggested that requests for assistance fall into three different categories. Sometimes learners ask for help when they detect some lack in their language competence and when they feel the need for further information about the target language to carry on their translation. They also sometimes request assistance for no other discernible purpose than to learn something.

As it is seen above, in line 18, L6 asked for help because L6 noticed some lack in the language competence. Along with this, other members including L2, L4, L5 and L6 were wondering about the meaning of the sentence in lines from 19 to 24. L5 gave a specific question to the others "What does pork barrels mean?" in line 25. In this instance of LREs, group members were struggling to know the exact meaning of the "Pork barrel" in the context. As it is seen in line 28, L2 tried to explain the meaning of "barrel" by referring to "wine barrel."

Then in line 30, L4 suggested the underlying meaning based on the information that L5 provided from an electronic dictionary before. In this LRE, learners learned not only the meaning of the sentence but also the contextually driven meaning and built up knowledge related to the field as well. The specific LREs demonstrate how a provision of lexical help scaffolds learners' understanding of content and deepens their critical thinking.

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As found in the lexical scaffolding through LREs, it revealed collaborative LREs in the interactions among the learners and also showed the learners' efforts to acquire a new second language word with each other's help. In some cases, even though learners tried to express their opinions for the topic, they could not speak their opinions correctly because of the uncertain feeling of specific words. Learners acquire how to speak in a correct form with the help of more capable peers. Other learners sought help directly from the others about what they were not sure about for the meaning, whereas the others tended to try to speak first without asking for help.

2. P-LREs

Phonological scaffoldings mean all instances of assistance taking place through LREs, concerned with the sounds of language, especially for the voice, sound, speech of words, and etc. Pronunciation-based LREs were found in the group activity about 18 percent of episodes.

Excerpt 4 (20120320-2 / 46:20 & 49:22)
During-Reading (Between Korea and Japan issue)

45 L3: Yim ( ) and her management firm(+) lodged [lau:::d:::gi:::d] strong
46 protests(+) with the broadcaster TBS( ) and demanded it ( ) and the
47 comedians issues an apology. (++) *Uhm::: Anti-Japanese sentiment is*
48 *boiling,(+)* Also martial[Mæ:::tal:::]? martial[Mæte:::rial:::]? artist Yim
49 Soo-jung?
50 L2: Martial[mɑ:rʃl], (+)
51 L3: =Oh::: martial[mɑ:rʃl], artist:::? *the boxer?*:::
52 L5: =[mɑ:rʃl],
53 L4: *Ultimate fighting:::?*
54 L3: And::: *her management* firm(+) lodged [lau:::d:::gi:::d],?
55 L4: =[lɑ:dʒ]
56 L3: Oh' [lɑ:dʒ] Then:::(+) *what does it mean?*
57 L2: [lɑ:dʒ] means:::,
58 L4: *Raise objections ( )to something:::,*
59 L5: *Make objections,*
60 L3: Ah::: (+) So it means::: they raised objections ( ) to TBS and:::
61 demanded an apology( ) for the comedians issues:::

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In excerpt 4, learners collaboratively solved L3's phonological errors of the words "lodged" [lɑ:dʒ] as well as "martial" [mɑ:rʃl]. The excerpt revealed important insights as to the role of collaborative interactions for language learning especially for the phonological aspect. Phonological scaffolds also commonly take place in group discussion because it is possible for learners to quickly project a correct form of pronunciation compared to the provision of lengthy definitions of words or meanings shown in L-LREs. If L3 had not been in a group work setting, she may not have realized her pronunciation errors.

In line 51 and 56, L3 made correct pronunciations of the words with the help of group members. In these cases, listening to peer's pronunciation as scaffolding may be an effective way to realize correct pronunciation of the words and to help the acquisition. Also by repeating correct sounds of words, L3 internalized the correct sounds of words. In other words, L3 extended her current level of competence as well as language proficiency. As Ohta (2000) emphasized in his study, appropriate peers' assistance, like excerpt 4, led to the learner's language development.

3. G-LREs

This section deals with the scaffolding related to grammatical rules, sentence structures and the choice of a grammatical inflection, etc. Grammer-based LREs were found in the group activity about 20 percent of episodes.

Excerpt 5 (20120327 / 01:04:50)
Post-reading discussion (Free school meals)

62 L6: This is not a problem of:::, we ( )
63 L5: Oh, so you can say ( ), from the Han river project:::, we can
64 received the other budget from this project?'
65 L6: Yes:::, it divice:::.
66 L5: Yes:::,
67 L6: Oh:::, so it can be divided into:::, (+) Okay,
68 L4: So, it's better to chose to free school, meal program, ( ) over the
69 Han river project?

In excerpt 5, each learner talked about the current issue of free school meals. The LRE was from a post-reading discussion session. All learners in a group already have built

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opinions for controversial issues as well as background knowledge on the given topic. It is seen in lines 65 to 69 that L6 preferred giving free school meals for all students to continuing the Han River Project. In line 65, L6 intended to say, "The Han River Project budget should be divided into the other welfare" but she could not state it. Even though L6 spoke the wrong word, "divice" instead of "divided into" in line 65, the learner immediately noticed that she had presented it incorrectly. Then in line 67, L6 self-corrected the expression by using a passive voice, so that her message was delivered to other members without any confusion.

Linguistic knowledge is acquired when some verbalization takes place in a social context, and this verbalization affects the learners to identify a linguistic problem and also to solve the problem collaboratively in a dialogical interaction. Ohta (2005, p. 420) mentions that self-correction happens "When a learner corrects his/her own utterance without being prompted to do so by another person." It is only conducted by the learner him/herself, as soon as a learner recognizes it without the peer's scaffolding. A learner can realize the error based on his/her background knowledge. Above is the example of the self-correction in group discussion. In this grammatical LRE through the self correction, the learner learned for herself instead of relying on the other learners or the teacher.

Excerpt 6 (20120404 / 01:09:18)
During-Reading (Snowballing Tuition Fees)

70 L3: *So, this sentence structure is*:::,
((All are looking at the sentence))
71 L3: *So here, what is an object word:::?*
((L3 seeks for help to others))
72 L4: *I do not usually translate it like this*:::,
73 L3: Then *"leaves" is a verb in the sentence, right?*
74 L4: Yes, and "which~ phrase" modifies the noun phrase "the social and
75 economic structure," and:::,
76 L5: Yes, it modifies "the social and economic structure," and then, it
77 makes sense.
78 L3: Um::: yea' I see. (+)

The excerpt above reveals a very important insight as to the role of collaborative dialogue for language learning. In excerpt 6, L3, L4 and L5 are involved in the discourse.

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It is part of the during-reading session regarding the snowballing tuition fee issue. The task that the students should do was to translate the following sentence into Korean, "Some critics are right to call for the restructuring of 400-odd four-year colleges and even overhauling the social and economic structure, which leaves almost no jobs worthy of their name for high school graduates."

As it is seen above, the sentence seemed as if a great challenge for L3 to complete her translation with a complicated sentence structure. When L3 translated the sentence, L3 was asking which one is an object in line 71 and which one is a verb in line 73 to the others because L3 did not understand each component of the sentence. In response to L3's questions, L4 and L5 took the roles of a tutor in order to give help to L3 by referring to the usage of wh-relative sentences in brief. Providing a direct explanation of grammatical structures by using meta-knowledge is one of several forms of G-LREs along with recasts and projections. Since L4 and L5 are more proficient learners than L3, they were in the position of giving scaffolding; in turn, L3 received the scaffolding from her more able peers. In this way, L3, L4 and L5 could understand the exact meaning of the target sentence in this group interaction.

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the research was to investigate (1) LREs categorized based on the linguistic aspects and (2) processes when learners exchange help to each other so that they co-construct their second language knowledge in their ZPDs. The analysis of the learners' discourse in the study revealed that the learners actively worked and assisted each other to build their second language knowledge through LREs in the group discussion activities.

The research findings are summarized in the following. First, LREs were divided into three categories based on the following linguistic aspects: (1) Lexis-based LREs, (2) Phonology-based LREs, and (3) Grammar-based LREs. It was found that a lot of specific help, such as telling the meaning of words, suggesting the words which are not certain, was helpful in the acquisition of the second language word. Also word order, spelling corrections or suggesting phrases or sentences were observed through LREs. In terms of the phonological aspect, many word pronunciation corrections were observed. P-LREs were most often identified because of the nature of easy contribution by which learners tried more often to provide correct forms of pronunciation compared to other

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types of LREs. In the grammatical aspects of LREs, it showed various kinds of scaffoldings such as explaining grammatical rules or sentence structures, recasting a choice of a grammatical inflection or form.

Along with the categorization of LREs, varied strategies such as projection, dictionary use, (self-)corrections were used to help less capable learners internalize build the second language knowledge. The study showed students' learning process in collaborative context where learners used various mechanisms to extend their second language proficiency. Some learners tended to utter the correct forms and usages as an internalization right after receiving the scaffolding, whereas others tended to learn the correct forms through LREs made from other learners' interactions and then internalize it in a meaningful way. So, the way how learners internalize the second language knowledge in their ZPDs depend on learners' learning styles, language confidence, proficiency levels and capacities. On top of the given various learning mechanisms found that collaborative peer interactions and scaffoldings through LREs were commonly observed in group discussion activities, making positive impacts on expanding learner ZPDs.

Two implications are proposed from the results of the study. First, as a research tool, LREs are a useful construct for understanding the nature of second language learning-in-action and inquiring into contributions that group interactions make in learning a second language. Second, the analysis of LREs in this study suggests that forming an effective and productive group learning environment can be one of the key elements to successful collaborative activities. Further studies on various conditions and mechanisms would shed great insights on teachers in the practice, so that they can better promote learner interactions in groups with greater confidence.

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APPENDIX

Transcription Conventions

Note that transcription conventions are adapted from Jefferson (1979) and Spencer-Oatey (2000).

Identity of speakers

T:	Teacher
L1:	Identified learners (Learner 1)
L:	Unidentified learner
L3?:	Probably Learner 3
LL:	Several or all learners simultaneously

Simultaneous utterances

[	Simultaneous, overlapping talk by two speakers

Contiguous utterances

=	No interval between the end of one speaker's turn and the beginning of the next speakers' turn

Intervals within and between utterances

( )	Micro pause
(+)(++)(1)	(+)= a pause of between .1 and .5 of a second (++)= a pause of between .6 and .9 of a second (1)(2)(3)= pauses of one, two or three seconds respectively.

Characteristics of speech delivery

-	A halting, abrupt cutoff
Hihihi	Laughter tokens
Underline	Underlined type indicates marked stress

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SYLVIA	Capitals indicate increased volume
,	Low rising intonation
'	Slightly falling or a continuing intonation
?	High rising intonation, not necessarily a question
:::	Lengthened syllable

Commentary in the transcript

(( ))	comment about actions noted in the transcript, including non-verbal actions

Other transcript symbols

co[l]al	brackets indicate phonetic transcription

Examples in: English
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