

NS-NNS Interactions Jointly Accomplished Abroad

Summary

The research project is a case study designed to investigate the development of Japanese ESL learners' interactional competence (IC) by collecting and analyzing data during the students' study abroad program. During the students' five-month study abroad program in the US or Canada, informal conversations between Japanese ESL learners and native speakers were recorded. What NNSs can say changes according to the participation in NS-NNS interactions. Therefore, this study recognizes that interaction is jointly accomplished.

The results

Speakers are generally known to withhold other-initiations of repair (OIRs). However, the current study shows that an interlocutor often offered a candidate solution of OIR because a participant could not put her ideas into words and asked for help. That is to say, the participant attempted to get her interlocutor to repair a trouble source. For example, a candidate solution of OIR demonstrated by a conversation partner is outstanding in frequency because Participant three expected her to provide it whenever expected for her help. Unless she received answers from the conversation partner, she would feel discontented and request assistance by asking, "How can I say?" (Extract 9).

Extract 9 (Friend)

1 S3 ↓yeah like ramen; lo:ng
2 pasta. and (4.1)
3→ Friend thin;
4 S3 ↓thin yeah but (1.3) the pasta
5 here is like (4.7) °°like°°
6 (1.3) how can i say. eh (2.8)
6→ Friend like raviolis;
7 S3 yeah yeah not ↓noodle.

A single sentence was collaboratively produced by participants and other interlocutors across the turns of talk. OIRs, particularly repeats, could help complete a conversation collaboratively in the interaction between participants and other interlocutors. For instance, Participant nine demonstrated an OIR to derive vocabulary from her host mother. The host mother said that it takes longer for helping an elderly get on and off a bus. Participant nine attempted to say it was time-consuming, but she could not remember it, so she repeated "time-" (Extract 26). She looked at the host mother's face and waited until she succeeded in obtaining a proper word. They cooperatively carried their talks forward, utilizing the information of interrupts.

Extract 26 (Mother)

1 Mother <yeah (0.2) but it takes ↓longer.=
2 S9 =yes. it takes longer;
3 Mother ↓right. [heh hhh]
4 S9 [so it's very] (0.6) AHH
5 it's time- (0.4) ↓time- (0.5)
6→ Mother consuming.
7 S9 ah. (0.3) °consuming. yes.°

Most of the trouble sources in this study were likely due to a lack of language ability of participants. Overall, when the participants encountered OIRs, they tended to respond shortly with yes or no without any clarifications. For instance, Participant four's host father asked her what she thought about the American host family, and she replied, "I think American family is more friendly than Japan" (Extract 13). The host father repeated part of a prior turn, "More friendly?" with rising intonation, specifying a particular source of trouble. Participant four did not understand his intention and just responded, "Yes" without any clarification or explanation. The host father attempted to infer it himself and offered the candidate solution of OIR, "Do we interact with you more than you would imagine a Japanese family would interact with an American exchange student?" As the candidate solution was too fast and complicated for her to understand, she gave up and answered with a wry smile, "Sorry" with a falling intonation. Although this topic lasted for a while, they could not find any understandings.

Extract 13 (Father & S4)

1 S4 i think american family is (4.5) more
2 friendly; °than japan°.
3→ Father more friendly;
4 S4 yes.
5→ Father do we: do we (2.3) interact with you
6 more than you would imagine a
7 japanese family would interact with
8 (.) an american exchange student?
9→ S4 heh sorry.
10 Father that's all right. i can slow down.

Conclusion

This current study shows that interactional competence is jointly constructed by all participants. Data were collected employing a conversation between the participants and their interlocutors during the study abroad program. The participants experienced different interactional opportunities, and those opportunities had consequences for the participants' L2 development.

Implication

These practices are also important ways to achieve vocabulary learning in everyday interactions.