Does Learners' Shared L1 Use for a Task Completion Hinder L2 Development?

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Abstract

A task helps second language learners experience and connect themselves to real-world communication. However, one of the challenges is to bring authenticity into the classroom of monolingual speakers (Japanese) enough to put real communicative demands on them. One way is to give discussion tasks in which learners speculate about issues that are generated from their own concerns. The benefits of L1 in learner-learner interaction in terms of scaffolding have been shown (e.g., Bao & Duo, 2015), nonetheless, little is known about the impact of L1 in the activities where learners can engage in at higher cognitive level on L2 development. The data was collected from an intermediate level of university students (B1, B2 at CEFR); one group (n = 29) who were allowed to use L1 in their discussions about current news and the other group (n = 18) used English only over the course in three months. Students were divided into groups of 3 or 4 members, discussed the problem presented and introduced opinions in front of the whole class. To backup the research context, retrospective questionnaires about participants' L1 use were collected every after the class. Pre- and Post- tests were conducted in written mode to examine language production and analyzed the number of sentences, readability, type token ratio, lexical diversity, spelling errors, and metadiscourse markers (Bax, Waller, & Nakatsuhara, 2014). The findings showed that, regardless of the language they used, the participants developed type-token ratio and readability as time goes, however, a majority of the participants used English only produced less metadiscourse markers in the post-test, while some participants in the other group showed more discourse markers including hedge and person marker along with logical connective. More details of the findings and the same investigation for two other groups in another course will be also addressed.

Keywords: L1 use, task authenticity, metadiscourse markers, L2 development.

References:
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