Conversational Analysis of Peer Interaction in English Classroom—The Perspective of Sociocultural Theory

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Abstract: From the perspective of sociocultural theory, this paper draws on LREs, which are widely used units of analysis in the field of second language acquisition. And it uses the recordings of peer discussions in English classrooms as corpus, and uses conversational analysis to explore peer interaction strategies in English classrooms and the cognitive co-construction it induces. Through analysis, it is found that in the cooperative dialogue in the form of language, peers can set up "scaffolding" for each other by asking for help, correcting errors, and guiding each other, so that language cognition can be developed in the "zone of proximal development".

Keywords: Sociocultural Theory; Peer Interaction; Conversational Analysis; Second Language Acquisition

Introduction

In second language acquisition theory and empirical research, "interaction" is an important concept. The emergence of sociocultural theory provides a new perspective for people to recognize and think about the relationship between interaction and language learning. This theory holds that the generation and development of human mental functions are contained in the interaction of society and culture. Participating in interaction is the foundation of language learning, not an aid. In the process of interaction, language is used as an intermediary to realize the co-construction of meaning and the internalization of collective wisdom of individual language, and the participants transform collective wisdom into individual wisdom. This theory not only emphasizes the mediating role of linguistic signs, but also the important role of the mediation of others. That is to say, in the process of second language learning, "experts" help learners to successfully cross the zone of proximal development by building a frame, and realize the process of transforming from psychological activities to psychological activities. In the traditional sense, "expert" or "significant others" refers to an adult (parent or teacher) (Wertsch1985)，However, some scholars further propose that peers can also create opportunities for language learning by building "scaffolding".

In addition, in terms of methodology, sociocultural theory advocates understanding L2 activities from the perspective of subject status, so that students can better understand the interaction between English learners.（Firth&Wagner1997）Dialogue analysis is a means of describing communicative activities, which pays attention to the characterization of speech details and the respect for objective language materials. This research method is inherently consistent with the research on the micro-level and thematic level advocated by sociocultural theory.

Since the late 1990s, foreign scholars have carried out a series of studies on peer dialogue in a second language (L2) from a sociocultural perspective. These studies include studies on second language development (Kim 2008), as well as the effects of task type and participant factors on interactive behavior (Dobao 2012). However, current research is mostly peer interaction research from a sociocultural perspective. It will use methods such as experiments, quasi-experiments, or supplemented by organic methods such as questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews, or discourse analysis, but there are few studies that use dialogue analysis as a tool. [1]

This paper discusses LREs, which are widely used analytical units in the field of second language acquisition, from a social and cultural perspective. Through dialogue analysis, it discusses how peers set up "scaffolding" to realize the semantic structure of language, and then promote the development of language.

1. Research objectives and research questions

This paper aims to explore strategies for achieving mutual aid in peer interaction, capturing some of the development of learners' language knowledge in the process of co-construction. The following two questions will be answered in this article:

1. How interactive companions become their respective "scaffolding"？

2. In the interactive process, how the learner's second language knowledge has been developed？

2. Corpus Sources and Data Analysis

Conversation snippets are from student conversations in English classes. The participants were senior high school students majoring in English education at a university. Students are divided into two groups and work together to complete a puzzle story. The students' discussions were fully recorded. The conversations analyzed in this paper were selected from fragments of linguistic forms discussed by students.S wain (1997) in the interaction research in the field of SLA (Service-Level Agreement), called the dialogue between individuals to collaboratively solve problems and build knowledge as cooperative dialogue.

In "cooperative dialogue", students use language as a medium to solve problems through communication and build up knowledge of language. In a "collaborative session", students discuss and question their own language and correct their own and others' mistakes. Swain (1997) defines it as language-related elements (LREs).

In recent years, LREs have become an important analytical framework for SLA research. This article attempts to use the method of conversation analysis to interpret these data from a sociocultural perspective. First, the researchers select LREs from the original corpus as criteria; Second, under the guidance of sociocultural theory, the peers in LREs were roughly annotated with multiple mutual aid strategies; Finally, we select representative segments from different reciprocity strategies and present them by means of dialogue analysis. In the analysis, the most common method is the next speaking round verification, through the next speaking round to understand the other party's understanding of the previous conversation. [2]

3. Research process and results

The following will illustrate how students in the "zone of proximal development" establish mutual understanding, realize the semantic construction of language forms, and develop the corresponding language knowledge in the "zone of proximal development".

3.1 Ask for help

【Fragment 1】

1A：And they were（4.0）"fortunate". How to say "Fortunate" in English?

2B：They feel fortunately（smile）

3A：They feel so fortunate to get the No.33bus.

After "and they were" in the first line, there is a 4 second silence. the latter sentence, What about the lucky ones? " It can be seen from A's "fortunate" that he is trying hard to find the English expression "fortunate". B gives the answer, but the low pitch after the adverb "ly" followed by a chuckle shows that B is not sure about the word. Instead of repeating the word directly, A removes "ly" and adds "so". A's pauses and explicit help-seeking indicate the difficulties it has encountered in expressing "fortunate" in English, as well as A's current actual level.

At this time, B "build a framework" for A, but B himself is not quite sure how to use the word. A accepts B's help, but instead of accepting it in its entirety, he critically corrects the mistake and creatively incorporates it into the next sentence, eventually forming the correct expression. Throughout the process, both sides were saying the word "fortunate". The two sides set up "scaffolding" and gained a deeper understanding of the usage of the word "fortunate".

correct mistakes

【Fragment 2】

1 A：bus ticket seller told them.told them this

2 B：＝this car

3 A：this bus don't...

4 B：this bus isn't the school bus

5 A：yeah，isn't＝

6 B：＝and

7 A：wasn't

8 B：oh wasn't

9 A：wasn't the school bus and told them...

Fragment 2 shows how classmates "build a frame" through error correction to build language together. In the beginning, when A hesitates, B gives the expression of "this car"，Then A is not repeated directly (line 3), but instead car is replaced by bus (bus is shown in the picture). On line 4, B restates and corrects A, changing "don't" to "isn't". At this point, the two sides reached a consensus to continue the story. But at this time, A performs self-correction and changes "isn't" to "wasn't". B also agrees and repeats "wasn't" (line 8). After the joint efforts of both parties, the two parties finally reached a new way of expression. This video proves that peers can detect each other's mistakes and correct them in a timely manner. Also, throughout the process, the person who helped with the previous problem may lead to the next problem and thus become the recipient of the next problem-solving procedure. In other words, problem solving depends on helping each other.

3.2 Guidance and Tips

【Fragment 3】

1B：so the 3boys got up the bus, and: they're on their way.

2A：on their way?

3B：they're on

4A：they are?5（2.0）

6B：Yes, they were, they were on their way

7A：ontheirway, and...

Fragment 3 shows that, through guidance, students are able to help peers recognize mistakes or achieve ideal forms of expression. On line 4, when A realizes the tense is wrong, he interrupts B with a "they are?" question. After asking the question, A does not directly point out B's mistake or correct it, but allows the other person time to think. At first, B didn't realize what he was doing wrong, but immediately changed to "were" and repeated it twice, emphasizing "they were". In line 7, A does not respond positively to B's self-correction, but repeats the second half of B's sentence, and uses an elongated "and" to indicate that he has no objection to the previous sentence. Fragment 3: A guides the other party to realize the gap between their actual level and the level they deserve by asking questions, and finally successfully bridges the "gap".

4. Conclusion and Implications

Through the analysis of the above results, we found that in the process of completing language construction and questions, peers adopted communication strategies such as asking for help, correcting errors and prompting. In addition, in peer dialogue, there is a prominent feature of helping each other: they will critically accept assistance, ask questions, and further revise or improve. So, in this process, the identity of the person who provides/receives also changes, and they are interdependent. Together, they reach a level beyond the reach of individuals and ultimately share knowledge. In the process of communication, students' language cognition has also been further developed. The questioning, correction, and perfection of the two parties in the dialogue to the final repetition and confirmation become the follow-up output source of the language, which reflects the transformation from the psychological platform to the internal psychological platform, and is also the cognitive development of the interactive subject. It is further demonstrated that the students can be either "experts" or "novices", or they can set up "scaffolding" with each other to complete knowledge sharing together. Therefore, students should be encouraged to collaborate in and out of the classroom.

References

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