ORAL DISCOURSE GENERATED THROUGH PEER-INTERACTION WHILE COMPLETING COMMUNICATIVE TASKS IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract: Drawing on qualitative observation data from a case study of an EFL classroom for pre-medical students in an Indonesian university, this article examines the oral discourse generated through peer interaction while completing two types of communicative tasks in terms of how much language was generated, including the amount of the L2 generated and the use of the L1. Findings indicate that the use of communicative tasks in this specific EFL context appears to provide students with opportunities for L2 production and to diminish L1 use in class. This is largely determined by the communicative tasks used and the EFL context.

Keywords: oral discourse, peer interaction, communicative tasks, an EFL classroom

Highlighting the main difference between two major sociolinguistic contexts of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL), Hall and Walsh (2002) state that second language classrooms include "contexts in which the language being learned in the classroom is also the language of the community" and "foreign language learning contexts are those in which exposure to and opportunities for target language interaction are restricted for the most part to the language classroom" (p. 186). In other words, the main difference between these two contexts is the access the learners have to the language being learned: in an ESL context, students have access to the language not only inside but even more outside of the classroom, often from native speakers (NSs) in diverse situations; while in an EFL context, their access to the lan-

guage outside of the classroom is very limited, though they may have access to the internet and English TV programs.

Obviously, one of the problems in learning a foreign language, particularly English as a foreign language (EFL), has always been providing quality linguistic input to learners. In such contexts, learners get exposure to the L2 primarily in the language classroom. One possibility of providing input and interaction opportunities to students is through communicative task-based instruction. In task-based instruction, learners use the language to transact tasks rather than primarily learning individual language items (Foster, 1999). As students transact tasks, they are engaging in activities which focus on meaning and require both comprehension and production of the language, activities which have been shown to promote their language learning. Skehan (1998, p. 95), in a synthesis of the essential characteristics from other definitions, defines task as an activity in which:

- meaning is primary;
- there is some communication problem to solve;
- there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities;
- task completion has some priority;
- the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome.

Most of the research on interaction during communicative tasks has taken place in ESL classrooms with students representing diverse first languages where English is necessarily the language of communication. Furthermore, much of it has been carried out in well-controlled experimental settings, focusing on learners, and particularly on the language they produce (see Mackey, 2007). However, there is relatively little research to date that focuses on the use of communicative tasks in actual working classrooms in an EFL setting and on student discourse (Hasan, 2006).

When students share the same first language (L1), like in most cases of the EFL settings, there is the issue of using the L1 in their talk. In a study on the L2 composing process, Wang and Wen (2002) found that EFL Chinese learners, when asked to compose aloud on two tasks, had both their L1 and L2 at their disposal. Tarone and Swain (1995) put forward the case of immersion students who avoid using the L2 in the classroom as they move into higher primary grade levels, particularly when conversing with one another. Furthermore, Carless (2004) and Carless and Gordon (1997) report some concerns from the teachers in Hong Kong while implementing task-based language

teaching about the learners' use of the L1 rather than the L2. Storch and Al-dosari (2010) report on students' use of L1 mainly for the purpose of task management and vocabulary facilitation and De la Colina and Mayo (2009) indicate the importance of L1 as a learning tool.

This article is based on a detailed qualitative case study (Tulung, 2008) of peer interaction and non-native teacher talk in an EFL classroom during the implementation of communicative tasks with Indonesian pre-medical students. It turned out that the tasks worked effectively well in this setting. However, this article focuses only on the oral discourse generated through peer interaction while completing the tasks, particularly from the perspective of how much language was generated during peer interaction. This includes the amount of language generated and the use of L1 during peer interaction.

METHOD

The study involved one course section with a teacher and 27 students, and covered both the sessions when they worked on selected communicative tasks and the regular whole-group sessions. All the students in this class were categorized as having an "intermediate" English proficiency level based on the placement test. In addition, they had passed the Academic Reading course taken in the previous semester. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20 years and most of them were in their first year of study at the Faculty of Medicine. Among the 27 students, only eight were studied in depth since they were the ones who participated in all four tasks (in two or three groups with rotating members).

In this study, the students were working on two types of communicative tasks, jigsaw and decision-making, adapted from their textbook and designed specifically to employ reading materials as well as peer interaction. These four tasks (two of each type), using reading texts as a basis for oral discourse generation, provided students with vocabulary used in different medical contexts as well as stimulated and enriched their conversational discourse. The students, working in small groups, were encouraged to talk about the topics in the texts, and needed to work together with others to solve problems and to get their meaning across through interactive discourse. In other words, the task design elicited interactive language and involved reading. In the jigsaw tasks, the students were provided with notes regarding information about different patients. Each had to share the information s/he had in order to complete the task, which was to fill in the patients' information table. In the decision-making tasks, the

students were all provided with a reading text on which their decision making was to be based regarding patients' cases. Due to this design, when completing both task types the students not only spoke spontaneously, but also sometimes read from a text. Hence, the nature of their oral language generated in general was analyzed as either spontaneous (i.e. when students talked spontaneously) or reading/partial reading (i.e. when students read verbatim from a text).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section considers the oral discourse generated through peer interaction from the perspective of how much language was generated through the use of communicative tasks in peer interaction. The first subsection deals with the amount of L2 use (in the form of word counts) and the second subsection deals with L1 use. The analysis of the word counts was based on how the students used the L2, that is, spontaneously or by reading, and the use of L1. The use of a shared L1 is particularly important since the context of the study allowed the participants to consciously or sub-consciously use it. For each subsection, an analysis of task type and individual differences is also presented.

Word Counts

One perspective of describing the nature of the language use involves how much language was generated through the communicative tasks in terms of word counts. This is particularly important since the context of the study was in an EFL classroom where the students shared the same L1, had limited access to L2 input, and had little opportunity for L2 production outside the classroom. The tasks were designed to employ written materials in order for the students to have access to the L2 input as a basis for their oral discourse, and to elicit interactive discourse among the students as an opportunity for their L2 production. Through word counts we can see whether the tasks provided the students with this kind of opportunity, and determine the influence of the reading materials and the L1 on their oral language production. Hence, the word count analyses consist of spontaneous language use, reading, and L1. L1 use is further analyzed from a different perspective in the next subsection.

The following table shows the total number and percentage of words used spontaneously, read, or spoken in L1 by the students in small groups during jigsaw and decision making tasks. It reveals one aspect of task difference involving the relative amount of spontaneous language vis-à-vis reading and L1 use.

Table 1. Word Counts in Jigsaw and Decision Making Tasks (n=8)

Words used	Jigsaw		Decision Making	
	No. of words	**%**	**No. of words**	**%**
Spontaneous	2473	49.9[1]	4584	85.7
Reading	2253	45.5	461	8.6
L1[2]	227	4.6	303	5.7
Total	4953	100.0	5348	100.0

As can be seen from Table 1, the total number of words in the jigsaw tasks is somewhat less than in the decision making tasks, with a difference of 395 words. This means the students talked a little bit less in the jigsaw tasks than in the decision making tasks. In terms of the numbers of words used, however, the students used spontaneous language almost twice as much in the decision making tasks as in the jigsaw tasks, and read aloud almost five times more often in the jigsaw tasks as in decision making tasks. They used the L1 similarly in the two task types, possibly slightly more in the decision making tasks than in the jigsaw tasks (5.7% compared to 4.6%). Within the task types themselves, in the decision making tasks the students mostly talked spontaneously compared to when they were reading: 85.71% compared to 8.62%. This shows how effective the decision making tasks were for generating spontaneous speech. This is very different in the jigsaw tasks where there seems to be a balance between students' use of spontaneous language and reading: 49.93% and 45.49%, respectively. This shows the role of reading that had an advantage in enabling practice of more difficult language interactively.

Tables 2 and 3 below show the distribution of spontaneous language use versus reading, and L1 use in the jigsaw tasks in terms of word counts. These analyses show individual and group patterns of language use, during the two

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[1] All numbers in decimals have been rounded to the nearest first decimal place.
[2] It appeared that students occasionally turned off the tape when they were talking in L1 while completing the tasks,
[2] It appeared that students occasionally turned off the tape when they were talking in L1 while completing the tasks, particularly Task 1 (Jigsaw) and 2 (Decision Making). Consequently, the L1 words counted here were based on what was on tape.

jigsaw tasks, including the influence of leadership roles on individual language use and differences within group patterns. The shaded area indicates which student was the leader of her/his group.

Table 2. Distribution of Spontaneous Language Use versus Reading Word Counts in Communicative Task 1 (Jigsaw) (n=8)

Task 1	Spontaneous		Reading		L1	Total No.
	Words	%	Words	%	Words	of Words
Group 1						
F1(leader)	342	63.2	194	35.8	5	541
F2	146	46.6	161	51.4	6	313
M1	54	26.6	140	67.9	12	206
M2	15	15.0	85	85.0	0	100
Subtotal	557	48.0	580	50.0	23	1160
Group 2[3]						
F4	152	50.8	143	47.8	4	299
M3(leader)	174	55.0	142	44.9	0	316
Group 3						
F6	94	34.7	174	64.2	3	271
M5(leader)	533	60.1	351	39.5	3	887
Total	**1510**	**51.5**	**1390**	**47.4**	**33**	**2933**

Table 3. Distribution of Spontaneous Language Use versus Reading Word Counts in Communicative Task 3 (Jigsaw) (n=8)

Task 3	Spontaneous		Reading		L1	Total No.
	Words	%	Words	%	Words	of Words
Group 1						
F1	171	56.2	106	34.8	27	304
F6	54	25.4	154	72.6	4	212
M2	33	18.5	115	64.6	30	178
M5(leader)	441	68.3	109	16.9	95	645
Subtotal	699	52.2	484	36.1	156	1339
Group 2						
F2(leader)	96	41.5	125	54.1	10	231

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[3] Only two members are shown for Groups 2 and 3 because the other two members of each group did not belong to the sample. For this reason the subtotals were not calculated.

Table continued						
F4	64	40.2	95	59.7	0	159
M1	44	27.1	90	55.5	28	162
M3	60	46.5	69	53.5	0	129
Subtotal	264	38.7	379	55.6	38	681
Total	**963**	**47.7**	**863**	**43.6**	**194**	**2020**

As can be seen from the tables, in general the students showed a relatively balanced use of spontaneous language and reading in both jigsaw tasks. While the leaders of the groups tended to use spontaneous language more frequently (55% to 68.3%) than reading (16.9% to 44.9%), the other members used spontaneous language less frequently (15% to 56.2%) than reading (34.8% to 85%). In terms of the total number of words per individual, the leaders of the groups in every case had more word production, ranging from 231 to 887 words, than the other members, ranging from 100 to 313 words. This means they talked more than the other members. In addition, Table 3 particularly shows within group differences in terms of group dynamics. While Group 1 seemed to have a dominating leader (M5), who produced almost 50% of the total number of words in his group, Group 2 appeared to have a democratic leader (F2), who produced about 30% of the total number of words in her group.

Tables 4 and 5 below show the distribution of spontaneous language use versus reading word counts, and L1 use in the decision making tasks. These analyses describe the patterns of language use, role of leadership, and individual/group differences during the decision making tasks. The shaded area again indicates which student was the leader of her/his group.

Table 4. Distribution of Spontaneous Language Use versus Reading Word Counts in Communicative Task 2 (Decision Making) (n=8)

Task 2	Spontaneous		Reading		L1	Total No.
	Words	**%**	**Words**	**%**	**Words**	**of Words**
Group 1[4]						
F1	171	61.7	46	16.6	60	277
F2	186	71.5	28	10.7	46	260
M1	218	72.6	35	11.6	47	300
M2	60	81.0	14	19.0	0	74

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[4] No leader is shown for Group 1, because the leader did not belong to the sample. For this reason the subtotal was not calculated.

Table continued

Group 2[5]						
F4	67	71.2	26	27.6	1	94
M3(leader)	52	51.5	49	48.5	0	101
Group 3						
F6	19	37.2	32	62.7	0	51
M5(leader)	524	89.7	59	10.1	1	584
Total	**1297**	**74.5**	**289**	**16.6**	**155**	**1741**

Table 5. Distribution of Spontaneous Language Use versus Reading Word Counts in Communicative Task 4 (Decision Making) (n=8)

Task 4	Spontaneous		Reading		L1	Total No.
	Words	%	Words	%	Words	of Words
Group 1						
F1	594	91.9	29	4.4	23	646
F6	238	96.3	0	0.0	9	247
M2	202	93.5	11	5.1	3	216
M5(leader)	1123	94.3	61	5.1	7	1191
Subtotal	2157	93.8	101	4.4	42	2300
Group 2						
F2	155	83.7	5	2.7	25	185
F4	329	85.4	55	14.3	1	385
M1	242	77.5	0	0.0	70	312
M3(leader)	404	95.0	11	2.6	10	425
Subtotal	1130	86.4	71	5.4	106	1307
Total	**3287**	**91.1**	**172**	**4.7**	**148**	**3607**

As can be seen from the tables, in general the students seemed to use spontaneous language more frequently than reading in both decision making tasks. Both the leaders of the groups and the other members tended to use spontaneous language much more frequently (51.5% to 96.3%) than reading (0% to 48.5%). In terms of the total number of words per individual, the leaders of the groups had more word production, ranging from 101 to 1191 words, than the other members, ranging from 51 to 385 words; however, in one case, the leader (M3 in Task 2, Table 4) exceptionally produced almost as many read as spon-

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[5] Only two members are shown for Groups 2 and 3 because the other two members of each group did not belong to the sample. For this reason the subtotals were not calculated.

taneously spoken words. This was because he usually read part of the patients' cases before asking the other members' opinions regarding the treatments. In addition, Table 5 particularly shows group differences in terms of group dynamics. While Group 1 seemed to have a dominating leader (M5) since he produced more than 50% of the total number of words in his group, Group 2 appeared to have a democratic leader (M3) with about 30% of the total number of words produced in his group. Unfortunately this pattern cannot be verified in Task 2, Table 4, due to the group members in Task 2 that included other students who did not belong to the sample.

L1 Use

Students' use of L1 is particularly essential to explore since the EFL context of the study allowed the students to consciously or sub-consciously use it. The previous subsection presents counts of L1 words used in both task types: 227 words or 4.6% in the jigsaw tasks and 303 words or 5.7% in the decision making tasks. This unfortunately does not give the full counts since the students occasionally turned off the tape while completing the tasks. But it shows that L1 was sometimes used by almost all students in the two task types, and as the students reported, they used more L1 in the decision making tasks when debating than in the jigsaw tasks.

This subsection looks at the L1 use differently in terms of the kinds of things the students do in the L1 by giving examples from the transcripts of both task types. Basically the students used the L1 in order to complete the tasks when they stumbled over the L2 vocabulary. In this subsection, the L1 use is differentiated between mere translating into the L1 and expressing ideas in the L1.

In terms of translating, students sometimes voluntarily provided translations in the L1, but they did this only once in a while in either task type. Example 1 shows the words "retired" and "policeman" were voluntarily translated into the equivalent L1 words "pensiunan" and "polisi" by M5 and F6, respectively. The following conventions are used when examples from the transcripts are presented.

# on the left margin	line counts by five
T	the teacher

S	an unidentified student
Ss	more than one unidentified student
M	male student
F	female student
# after M/F	student identification
/ between students	when it was difficult to determine who said an utterance
[in front of students	when two students said an utterance simultaneously
Bold	when an utterance was read from a text
Italics	when an utterance was in the L1
(Italics)	when an utterance was translated into the L2 equivalent
/…/	when an utterance was written as pronounced
(…)	when additional information was given
{…}	when certain analysis was provided
[…]	when an utterance was added
…	when an utterance was omitted

Example 1 Translating into the L1 in Communicative Task 1 (Jigsaw), Group 3

> M5: **He is a retired policeman.**
> F5: He is?
> M5: **retired**, *pensiunan (retired)*
> F6: retired?
> M5: **retired policeman, retired**
> F6: *polisi (policeman)*

In terms of expressing ideas in the L1, the students did this while they were dealing with task management and task content, and in both cases they either replaced the unknown L2 vocabulary with the L1, or discussed an issue almost entirely in the L1. Task management refers to the procedures of the task, particularly when the students were dealing with how to start doing the task, keep it going, and finish it. Task content refers to the specific topic of the task or the information presented in the tasks.

When dealing with task management, the use of L1 was relatively brief, particularly when the students wanted to instruct or suggest that the others do

something. This occurred a few times, specifically in the decision making tasks, as shown in Example 2 below.

Example 2   Brief use of the L1 when dealing with task management in Communicative Task 4 (Decision Making), Group 2

> M1: Um I think must start from the chief.
> F2: M1, *jang bermain kwa (please don't play).*
> M1: Patient two, *to? (right?)*
> F2: Patient one.

However, L1 interventions were relatively lengthy when the students wanted to figure out the task procedure, and this occurred a few times in both task types. Example 3 below captures the longest exchanges in the L1 when dealing with task management in a jigsaw task, and Example 4 shows the typical length in exchanges dealing with task management in a decision making task.

Example 3   Extended use of the L1 when dealing with task management in Communicative Task 3 (Jigsaw), Group 1

> M5: *Cuma baca-baca? Cuma baca-baca? (Just reading? Just reading?)*
> F1: *Yang pasti nda (Of course not only that)*
> M5: *Cuma baca-baca dang? Nya ada beking diagnosis (Just reading then? No need to come up with a diagnosis).*
> F1: *Ya mungkin diagnosisnya nephronic syndrome (Well maybe the diagnosis is nephronic syndrome).*
> M5: *Trus nda ada, torang bukan mo cari diagnosis to? (So, there's no, we don't need to find out the diagnosis, right?)*
> F1: *Ini depe diagnosis to (This is the diagnosis, right).*
> M5: *So ada di sini (It's in here).*
> F1: *So ada di sini. Io, trus depe diagnosis apa? (It's in here. Right, so what's the diagnosis?)*
> M5: *Ini? (This?)*
> F1: *Io, ini dia pe diagnosis (Yes, this is the diagnosis).*
> M5: *Maksudku torang nda mo cari, nda usah cari apa depe diagnosis bagitu (I mean we don't need to find out, don't need to come up with the diagnosis ourselves like that).*
> F1: Oh
> M5: *Mar ini kan torang cuma tulis-tulis. Co lia (But here we just write it down. See.).*

F1: *Sekarang (Now)* patient two.
M5: Ok, patient two. *Cuma baca saja (Just simply read).*
F1: Up to you, you are the chairman.

Example 4   Extended use of the L1 when dealing with task management in Communicative Task 4 (Decision Making), Group 2

M1: Patient three *dulu (first).*
M3: *Kase berurut jo (Just rank them in order).*
F2: Hm?
M3: *Se berurut jo yang paling penting (Just rank them in order who is the most important).* More important.
M1: Ok, I think patient three

As can be seen from the examples, the students used the L1 when they had trouble expressing ideas in the L2 regarding task management. They did this by mixing it with the L2 or completely using the L1 in a single exchange or in more than two exchanges. When it was in more than two exchanges, as in Examples 3 and 4, a negotiation regarding the way to do the tasks usually occurred. After they solved the problem, they got back to using the L2 and usually continued with the topic of the previous discussion without translating back into the L2 what they had said in the L1.

The use of L1 in terms of idea expression was also found when the students were dealing with task content. It was relatively brief when the students were only replacing certain word(s) or phrase(s) in the L1 to complete their utterances. This sometimes occurred in both task types, as shown in Examples 5 and 6 below. Example 5 shows how F2 used the word "tantu" in the L1 instead of "of course" as part of the answers to F1's questions in a jigsaw task.

Example 5   Brief use of the L1 when dealing with task content in Communicative Task 1 (Jigsaw), Group 1

F1: The doctor diagnose?
F2: *Tantu (of course)* painful.
F1: And advice?
F2: *Tantu (of course)* when he carries bundles.

Example 6 shows how F1 used the word "mempengaruhi" in the L1 instead of "influential" to complete her utterance when working on a decision making task.

Example 6   Brief use of the L1 when dealing with task content in Communica-
tive Task 4 (Decision Making), Group 2

>   M5: What about in her status, he's a poor woman.
>   F1:   Status is, status, status is not *mempengaruhi (influential)*.
>   M5: How, how she can pay

Another brief use of L1 dealing with task content was when the students
were negotiating meaning. This was typical in the jigsaw tasks, as illustrated in
Example 7 below. The phrase "per liter ini" in the L1 in line 4 and the word
"apa" in line 7 serve as signals of the negotiation of meaning involved.

Example 7   Brief use of the L1 when dealing with task content in Communica-
tive Task 3 (Jigsaw), Group 2

>   F4: Results of the investigation, **lab tests show, lab tests show alkaline
>   phosphotase** (pause) **one hundred and sixty units, one hundred and
>   sixty units**
>   M1: *per liter ini? (is this per liter?)*
>   F4: **per liter. Cholestrol, choles, cholecystography shows a non-
>   functioning gall bladder, gall bladder**.
>   M1: Choles *apa? (what)?*
>   F4: **Cholecystography shows a non-functioning, functioning gall bladder**.

However, the L1 was used relatively extensively in task content when the
students were discussing an issue. This usually occurred in the decision mak-
ing tasks. Example 8 below captures the longest exchanges in the L1 when
dealing with task content.

Example 8   Extended use of the L1 when dealing with task content in Com-
municative Task 2 (Decision Making), Group 1

>   F1: *Ini obat pengobatan terhadap penisilin, bukan penisilin yg hipersensitif
>   to? (This medicine is for penicillin, it's not a hypersensitive penicillin,
>   right?)*
>   M1: **Alternative to penicillin in hypersensitive patient**
>   F1: *Io, tapi ngana ingat dia ini sakit apa, dia ini meningitis karna pneumo-
>   coccus.*
>   *Kalu kita kase ini, dia ada hubungan so dgn meningitis ini? Berarti ngana
>   (Yes, but you should remember what kind of illness he has, he is with meningi-
>   tis due to pneumococcus. If you give him this, does it have relation to menin-
>   gitis? It means you).*

M1: *Kalu orang alergi pa penisilin, rupa ngana alergi penisilin (If someone is allergic to penicillin, like if you are allergic to penicillin).*

F1: *Io (Yes).*

M1: *Dia kase eritomisin (He is given erythomycin).*

F1: *Io tapi ini sembuhkan ini, bukan sembuhkan ini (Yes, but this cures this, not this one).*

M1: *Dia bukan mo sembuhkan ngana pe alergi (It is not to cure your allergy).*

F1: *Io (Yes).*

M1: *Ah, nda mangarti lei (Well, you don't get it).*

F2: *Yah (Well)*, co-trimoxazole.

M7: So, you think M1 erythomycin is same with penicillin, ya?

M1: Yes.

M7: Can cure *apa (what)*, *apa yg penisilin bisa (what penicillin can)*.

M1: *Io stow (Yes, maybe)*. Maybe.

M7: *Jang pake stwo kwa (Don't say maybe, ok?)*.

F2: Penicillin, just the same. He's allergic to penicillin. Erythomycin is the same 25 to penicillin?

As can be seen from the example, the students were using the L1 when they had trouble expressing ideas regarding task content in the L2. They did this by completely using the L1 in more than two exchanges; in other cases by mixing the L1 and L2 in a single exchange or more. When they did this, it was usually to make a decision regarding a topic. In other words, they were negotiating the content. Hence, reasoning, agreeing, and disagreeing occurred. After they solved the problem, they got back to using the L2 and usually continued with the topic without translating back into the L2 what they had said in the L1.

Discussion

As shown in the findings, both jigsaw and decision making tasks generated considerable amount of language in this EFL classroom. Due to the task design that employed reading materials for oral production, the outcomes of student language production in both task types had the element of reading, which was used interactively, in addition to spontaneous language use. In terms of how much language was generated, though both task types generated a considerable amount of language, it seemed that the students talked somewhat less in the jigsaw tasks than in the decision making tasks. However, the word count analysis shows that in the jigsaw tasks there seemed to be a balance between

students' use of spontaneous language and reading aloud, while in the decision making tasks the students mostly talked spontaneously compared to the time spent reading. This means that though both task types provided them with opportunities for interaction and learning which the students made use of, the decision making tasks provided them with more opportunities for spontaneous language use. In other words, the findings reveal how task type influences the kind of language students produced (Crookes & Gass, 1993) including the amount and type of interactional features (Kasanga, 1996). But it was also discovered that individual differences affected the amount of language generated, particularly in decision making tasks.

Interactive language use during task implementation was in part influenced by the L1 use, one of the familiar issues arising during small or pair group work (Carless, 2004; Carless & Gordon, 1997). Due to the learning context of EFL where the students shared the same L1 among themselves, use of the L1 seemed to be inevitable in their production during task completion. In both task types the L1 was sometimes used to simply translate or express ideas dealing with task management and task content. When dealing with task management in both task types, the students tended to use the L1 briefly to instruct the others or suggest that the others do something, and to use it extensively to figure out task procedures. When dealing with task content, they tended to use it briefly to negotiate meaning, which was typical in the jigsaw tasks, and to use it more extensively to discuss an issue, which was typical in the decision making tasks.

Reported reasons for using the L1 are students' limited L2 proficiency, habit and spontaneity; an L1 environment; the need to move along; and unintelligible pronunciation or lack of comprehension. Several of these reasons were also reported in Carless' (2004) and Storch and Aldosari's (2010) studies. When students used the L1 extensively, it was usually to make a decision regarding a topic. In other words, they were negotiating the content. Hence, reasoning, agreeing, and disagreeing occurred. After they solved the problem, they got back to using the L2 and usually continued with the topic without translating back into the L2 what they had said in the L1. This indicates that the L1 is an important tool for the students and that there is task-related variation in its use, as also found in de la Colina and Mayo's (2009) study.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This article reports on the use of communicative tasks in an EFL classroom. It describes the nature of EFL university students' oral discourse generated through peer interaction while completing two types of communicative tasks (jigsaw and decision making) in terms of the amount of language generated and the use of L1 during peer interaction. Task design involved both reading written texts, which provides more complex language, and speaking in small groups, which gives the opportunity to communicate and interact; a necessary condition in EFL settings where language input and opportunity for production are limited. The findings of the study show that jigsaw and decision-making tasks generated a considerable amount of interactive language as students interacted and cooperated during task implementation, and the two task types complemented each other. In jigsaw there seemed to be a balance between students' use of spontaneous language and reading, while in decision making the students mostly talked spontaneously compared to their oral production when reading. In addition, analysis of the use of L1 shows that the L1 was sometimes used in both task types to simply translate or to express ideas dealing with task management and task content.

Overall, the use of communicative tasks in this specific EFL context appears to provide students with opportunities for L2 production, spontaneously or interactively by reading; and to diminish L1 use in class but not completely eliminate it since it also serves as an important tool for their learning. This is largely determined by the communicative tasks used and the EFL context.

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