Power, Position and Autonomy:
Student Conflict in a Communicative Language Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Foreign language educators dedicated to facilitating a communicative classroom often express their satisfaction when their learners actively engage the target language with minimal teacher interference. However, with the nearly ubiquitous implementation of pair- and group- work activities in the language classroom, it is virtually impossible for even the most perceptive teachers to be cognizant of the dynamics of every conversation. Even in what may appear to be cooperative, equal participation in the completion of the task, conflicts, domination and marginalization of participants can emerge. In this study, a semi-autonomous learning environment in which students were placed in pairs to complete a learning task without the teacher present to mediate the student interaction was examined using Conversation Analysis (CA). It was found that the participants each attempted to be in control of the task and their partner by competing for the position of "the dominant knower," resulting in a prolonged power struggle. The fact that the teacher was called in to settle their disagreements even inadvertently reinforced one student's claim to the dominant position.

INTRODUCTION

Student- initiated/-directed talk is an important component of classroom discourse, and reinforces the notion that students can learn as much or more from one another as from a teacher. With group and pair work tasks becoming central to the communicative second and foreign language classroom, action research into the nature of student-student exchanges is undeniably relevant to the field. Assigning pair-work has become a fundamental component of the speaking syllabus for teachers wishing to have their students actively engaged in the target language rather than react only to teacher-centered prompts. Even at the beginning and false-beginning levels, it is common for teachers to construct contexts in which learners may exchange their ideas on any number of topics. The teacher, in parallel, moves from pair to pair, intervening only when there is a need. As such, students are left largely to self- monitor, negotiate, and repair language throughout these tasks. Taking such control or "ownership" of the language enhances student autonomy and is believed to increase motivation.

While teachers may think that providing autonomous learning and speaking opportunities is beneficial for students, with oftentimes one single teacher vis-à-vis a class of 20 or more students, it is almost impossible to effectively monitor each ongoing conversation. Thus, it is

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questionable whether students are indeed properly engaging in the given task(s). More importantly, what is actually happening in these simultaneous conversations? How important is it that students are engaging in the task(s), as long as they are using the target language for communication?

To better understand what might be happening in conversations that take place during pair-work discussions in an English as a Second Language (ESL) context, the author collected data from one particular session involving two intermediate-level students with different first language (L1) backgrounds. The students were left to complete the task assigned with minimal instructor contact. The author focused on one straightforward but important research question: *What is going on in this pair-work task?* Given that there are normally multiple pair-work activities taking place simultaneously within one single ESL session, the findings may also speak to some other issues often overlooked in this kind of research.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Communicative Language Learning and Autonomy

Much of the pedagogical rationale for pair work is based on the belief that communicative language learning promotes second language (L2) acquisition. In focusing on the production of comprehensible, meaning-focused output for self-expression (Mackey, 2007; Swain, 1985, 2007), learners become in charge of the language used in communication, rather than being constrained by teacher -fronted/-controlled communicative acts. In other words, learners will take "ownership" of the language, resulting in a concomitant increase in learner autonomy and feelings of empowerment (Ellis, 1998; Kohonen, 1992). Steadily reducing students' dependence on the teacher promotes the former's independent processing of classroom activities, and the self-selection of the language (i.e., structures and expressions in the L2) necessary to complete those activities. Only then will they more likely identify, and restructure their own goals.

Building on the work of Vygotsky (1978), sociocultural theorists maintain that learners' dependence on teacher-driven, scaffolded instruction (*interdependence*) should naturally and gradually evolve into student self-sufficiency (independence), in which students begin to take ownership of the learning (Lantolf & Thorn, 2006). This gradual deconstruction of the teacher-controlled, scaffolded model has been referred to as *handover* (Bruner, cited in van Lier, 2001), *stepping aside* (Blair, 2009) and *fading* (Hennessey, 2005). These all involve the teacher's "gradual abbreviation and withdrawal of help, and learner participation increases as independent thinking and skills are developed" (Hennessey, 2005, p. 267). The gradual withdrawal of teacher control over the learning process (i.e., the *transmission of knowledge model*; also known as the *"teacher as knower" model*) should eventually give way to the "advising, structuring, guiding and assessing" (p. 268) of learning from the teacher. In this sense, group and pair-work activities seem well-suited to providing students with opportunities to increase their independence by allowing them to gradually take "ownership" of their language output.

The notion of student-centered, autonomous learning has its roots in the shortcomings of traditional classroom pedagogy, as exemplified by the overused *initiation-response-evaluation* (IRE) script – and pedagogical approaches that limit self-directed output, such as the grammar translation and audio-lingual methods. While these approaches have certainly gone out of vogue in North America, they are still quite widely adopted in Asian contexts (see Barns, 1992; Ellis,

1990; Gorsuch, 1998; Hall & Walsh, 2002; Zuengler & Bent, 1991). These pedagogical approaches emphasize the student's ability to imitate the teacher, at the expense of empowering them with self-directed, independent learning.

Group Work

Collaborative learning research has generated a fair amount of debates: some researchers (Crowley, 1997; Peters, 2010; Romney, 1997; Wells & Arauz, 2006) are in support of the practice, while others (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Leki, 1990) are much more critical about it. A fair amount of research has studied group dynamics and classroom interactions among L2 learners. One focus is on how student participation may be influenced by an individual's linguistic culture (Fujimoto, 2010; Hellermann, 2006; Mori, 2002); another is on the extent to which L2 acquisition may be supported through cooperative academic learning tasks that provide opportunities for learners to integrate their unique sociocultural identities (Duran & Szymanski, 1993,1995).

In an attempt to situate group and pair-work within the theoretical framework of communities of practice (Lave & Wagner, 1991), Hellermann (2008) highlighted several features particular to placing learners in face-to-face interactions. Primary to these is the notion that "students co-construct social actions that are made available by students' physical co-presence and common goal orientation to a task" (p. 26). An added benefit to these social interactions comes from the fact that students are often placed in a position to deal with communicative problems not necessarily task-dependent. Therefore, from the perspective of experiential learning (Dewey, 1938), these are sites in which the participants themselves must identify or orient to the problem (e.g., starting a task, explicating something within the task, ending the task). Then, through localizing, personalizing, and contextualizing their interactions, they would have to resolve each issue with language practice.

Building on the work by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), Markee (2000) examined the turn-taking system in the language classroom and highlighted two distinct systems for interaction based on (a) equal power exchange, and (b) unequal power exchange. *The equal power exchange system,* generally applied to student-student interactions, is characterized by frequent exchange of turns, minimal overlaps, and differing turn allocation techniques (such as self-selecting and selecting the next speaker). It is noted, however, that when the teacher is present but not one of the group members, this "default" equal power speech exchange system is overridden by the *unequal power exchange system*. In this latter system, the teacher is counted upon in learners' self-selecting and selection of the next speaker(s). While this orientation is fairly obvious in teacher-fronted environments, in cases when students are engaged in group-work, the teacher's irregular presence can disrupt the natural turn-taking order of the equal power exchange system. In addition, when one member of the group reaches out for help from the teacher (i.e., current-speaker-selects-next), then the unequal power exchange system dictates that the teacher is given the right and obligation to speak. In other words, "teachers are now sequentially obliged to do the answer turns" (Markee, 2004, p. 585). When this happens, the preferred power structure in the classroom prescribes that students "orient to the teacher as a leader of the classroom and allow such abrupt shifts in participation structures as unremarkable" (Hellermann, 2008, p. 109).

With the intervention of teachers periodically in pair-work activities deemed "unremarkable," what may turn out to be surprising is the number of instances in which teachers

misunderstand or misinterpret the reason(s) for being called by students. For one, Mori (2004) found that teachers tended to orient to the student that signaled them as the "owner of the problem" (p. 544), when in fact the problem originated with another student who opted not to call for teacher intervention. Markee (2004), similarly, found that students often make ambiguous or misleading claims about exactly who is having trouble understanding something in a pair or group, a process referred to as *tactical fronting talk* (p. 584); teachers in turn orient themselves to whoever that asked the question. In both studies, the teacher's intervention has led to further complications and confusion, without his or her noticing it. At the same time, students apparently avoided making the exact nature of the problem explicit. Thinking that they had sufficiently attended to the issue(s), the teachers thus closed the episodes and moved on. Students seem to accept this manner of interaction as the power dynamics inherent to institutional discourse, which dictates that the teacher is the ultimate "arbiter" in the classroom should questions or conflicts arise (Hellerman, 2008, p. 112). This is so whether the teacher is aware of the exact nature and cause(s) of the problem(s) at hand or not.

Conflict and Marginalization

While communicative breakdowns, clarifications, and repairs have been eminently studied in student-student interactions, little research has looked microscopically into the power-struggles and conflicts that may emerge during ESL group work between students with different L1 backgrounds. At best, Leki (2001) and Morita (2004) examined group-work interactions at American universities with a mix of native and non-native English speakers. It was found that non-native English speakers' participation in group work was somewhat limited by how the target language was perceived – both by the learners themselves, and their community of practice – as well as the related cultural differences. In particular, Morita found that students with Japanese L1s tended to define membership in the community as being predicated on English language proficiency; as non-native speakers (NNSs) themselves, they felt marginalized and excluded by the native speakers (NSs). In the study, having been assigned the role as "novices" or "learners" led the NNSs to feel that they had lost their face within the community.

Similarly, Leki (2001) found that even though the experiences of the non-native speakers were often more relevant to the tasks than those of the native speakers, they were not valued by other group members. Rather, efficiency would dictate that the more linguistically competent participants take charge and determine the extent to which the foreign students could contribute. For fear that they would be further excluded from the community – and would thereby once again lose face – the NNS students were found to be less motivated in their group-work participation. One teacher in the study, seeing that his students were engaged in their group-work activities at somewhat the same level, argued that there was no need for teachers because the students seemed to be able to handle it. Apparently, he was unaware of the power and submission taking place in his own classroom apparently. To the teachers, the outcome seemed more important than what actually happened in the collaborative group-work phase. On this basis, Leki concludes that "group work evokes issues of power—the power to define others and force them to behave in ways consonant with that construction" (p. 61). Even though Leki only investigated the marginalization issue in group work among highly proficient NNSs, with NSs acting as gatekeepers to a community of practice, the issue at hand remained by and large the same in nature: when one member sees himself or herself as being more proficient than others in the group, a similar learner/knower or master/apprentice power dynamic may well surface. After

all, proficiency is considered by many learners to be a "legitimate" pass to becoming a true member of virtually any ESL community of practice; it somewhat determines one's place within that community as well to some extent (Hellermann, 2008).

METHOD

Context

The present study took place at an intensive English language institute in a small liberal arts college on the east coast of the United States. Students were of different L1 backgrounds, and in their early twenties. They met 18 hours a week for 15 weeks. Data were collected during a 30-minute pair-work activity in which the participants were expected to create a radio advertisement in the form of a dialogue. The task followed a two-week segment on advertising in which students learned how to recognize the emotional appeals and various target audiences of radio advertising. The teacher placed students in pairs after providing a model of an example dialogue. The teacher was roaming around the classroom, attending to a total of ten student pairs.

Participants

The participants in this data set, Vivi and Mi, (pseudonyms), were paired up by the teacher because they appeared to be among the more conversationally competent in the class. They did not share the same L1: Vivi was an L1 Chinese speaker, whereas Mi's L1 was Korean.

Data Collection

The collection of data in the present study followed the methodology of Conversation Analysis (CA) (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Mehan, 1979), which is recently being applied to the EFL (English as a foreign language) and ESL contexts (Fujimoto, 2010; Hellermann, 2006; Kasper, 2004; Mori, 2002; Wong & Waring, 2010) to shed light on the interactional dynamics of non-native English speakers. The conversation episodes were recorded to a voice recorder placed close enough to the participants to capture their talk. The data were transcribed in its entirety following the CA tradition; they were then thoroughly reviewed, with salient features were identified and isolated. In line with the CA methodology, the author sought to let the data inform the findings and interpretation (see Appendix B for a full transcript).

FINDINGS

Nintendo Wii

From the outset, both participants were determined to direct the task at hand, which was to write a radio advertisement in the form of a dialogue. First, they needed to decide on the product to advertise:

1	Vivi:	I think I would like to se:::ll,
2	Mi:	Mmmm. I (2.0) I (3.0) like to introduce Hawaii.
3	Vivi:	Yeah. I I I want to go ↑Hawaii.
4	Mi:	Hawaii ↑honeymoon=
5	Vivi:	=how <u>beau</u>tiful.
6	Mi:	Hawaii honeymoon and (2.5) [ah::]
7	Vivi:	[Sell,]
8	Mi:	Sell. Advertise company::y vacation.
9	Vivi:	Sell. Sell. You want to sell? ↑Sell something.
10	Mi:	Mmm.
11		(5.0)
12	Vivi:	People buy some::thing, thi::ng.
13	Mi:	What do you mean ↑Something?
14	Vivi:	Ah::
15	Mi:	Peopl::e buy some[thing.]
16	Vivi:	[Wii.]
17	Mi:	We?
18	Vivi:	Wii. Wii. W-I-I. The the play machine.
19	Mi:	Ah [<u>Wii,</u>]
20	Vivi:	[Wii,]=yeah.

As can be seen, the turn-taking protocols exemplified in this excerpt (as well as the full data set in general) largely follow *an equal power speech exchange system* (Markee, 2000) – consisting of frequent speaker alternation, and minimal interruption and overlap. In addition, participants have roughly the same number of turns, indicating that the participation was "balanced" at least in this respect. That being the case, the precise meaning of "Wii" was problematic for the two students, even though Vivi later managed to self-repair it without the teacher's intervention. Self-repair, as pointed out by Markee, is the preferred mode for NNSs for the fact that it tends to be less face-threatening than other types of repair. We will return to this point when the teacher is called upon to adjudicate disagreements between the participants below, which inherently involves more face issues.

Looking more deeply into this episode, it is also evident that a power struggle seemed to be gradually developing. Specifically, while brainstorming for a product to advertise, Mi first proposed that they create their advertisement for a Hawaiian vacation, an idea Vivi was initially pleased with (line 5), but insisted that they sell something more concrete, and suggested that they sell the Nintendo Wii instead. At this point, a disagreement emerged as to whether or not the advertisement must be for a tangible "thing" rather than a vacation. Mi disliked the idea of making an advertisement for an existing product (line 35); as both students believed they were right, they were at an impasse. Mi elicited the help of the teacher:

33	Mi:	Sell game machine. Bu::t name of product we sell is Wii?
34	Vivi:	Yeah.
35	Mi:	No:: We have to make product. New Product.
36	Vivi:	Ah::: No.
37	Mi:	We will make something.
38	Vivi:	Ah (2.0) well (2.0)

39	Mi:	TEACHER.
40	T:	Yeah.
41	Mi:	We=we will make Ad.
42	T:	Yeah=
43	Mi:	=For the product.
44	T:	Yes. An advertisement for your product.
45	Vivi:	If we call, (1.8) It has name. So:: we also have to make a new name?
46	T:	It already has a name?
47	Vivi:	Yeah.
48	T:	You can use the name it has already. What's it called?
49	Vivi:	Wii. (2.0) W-I-I.
50	T:	Oh Nintendo Wii. Yeah you can say Nintendo Wii.
51	Mi:	↓Ah::
52	T:	You're going to sell Nintendo Wii?
53	Vivi:	Yeah.
54	T:	OK.
55	Mi:	((Writing)) W-I-I.

A drastic change in the dynamics of the power exchange system is evident in this episode. Of particular relevance here is the fact that while it is Mi who initially called for the teacher (line 39), her subsequent utterances were not in the form of a question, but a repetition of the task requirements. Instead, it is Vivi who poses a question to the teacher, and it is this question (and thus Vivi) to which he orients. This is in line with the power dynamics prescribed in institutional discourse, which contends that teacher-student interaction is not equal: the teacher would almost always have "the final word" in disputes on pedagogical matters (Hellermann, 2008). In short, an unequal power exchange system was in play from this point onward.

This episode also sheds light on the role of the teacher in pair work activities, and whether power struggles and/or marginalization were present. The fact that Vivi and Mi competed to get the teacher to side with herself (as discussed above) somehow reaffirms the teacher's role as the ultimate "knower" or "expert" in the community, someone who could fortify either of the participants' claim for dominance. Sensing the potential to lose face should the teacher sided with Mi, the other participant, Vivi chose to address him first with a question. From a pedagogical point of view, creating an advertisement for a non-existing product would have required deeper cognitive operations, thus supporting Mi's opinion; however, the teacher was unaware of the preceding turns, and wrongly assumed that *both* students wished to create an advertisement for *Nintendo Wii*. Nor did he ask any questions of the students that might have illuminated the nature and origin of the dispute. Instead, he inadvertently sided with Vivi, and asks Vivi if they will be selling the Wii (line 52). Vivi responds in the affirmative, as if the decision had already been made. The teacher thus closes the interaction with a definitive "OK," effectively ending the dispute. At this point, Mi, having lost face, utters a sigh of disappointment (line 51), and wrote the word "Wii" on her paper.

Making the Story

With the dispute settled by the teacher, Mi accepted the product, and the pair began to flesh out a possible dialogic scenario for the advertisement. Vivi disagreed with Mi's ideas, and

proposed her own:

56	Mi:	I think ah:: younger child::=
57	Vivi:	=No good. Young child is no good. Older people is good.
58	Mi:	Why?
59	Vivi:	Hu=hu::mor.
60	Mi:	But just playing Wii. We need CONVERSATION for ad.
61	Vivi:	↓Ah::
62	Mi:	I see you playing Wii. What are you doing Vivi? I say. Dinner is ready=
63		come on. See=make sentence. [See?]
64	Vivi:	[O::h]
65	Mi:	Finally family all people play game.
66	Vivi:	Yeah=father mother::=
67	Mi:	=Finally mother says come on let's play.
68	Vivi:	Oh >nice nice,<
69	Mi:	Mmm. Humor bu::t conversation.
70	Vivi:	↑Ah. (2.0) I have a NEW idea. New idea. No younger people play the Wii
71		have the older people play the Wii. And the younger people say what
72		are you doing grandpa? Yeah. And grandma grandpa say I play the Wii.
73		Maybe we have an interesting story.
74	Mi:	Yeah. Yeah. But Vivi is it advertisement?
75	Vivi:	Advertisement?
76	Mi:	Yeah:: Vi:vi:: we want to study a::dvertisement. Target audience all that.
77	Vivi:	Ah:: ((laughing))

The conflict in this sequence involves Mi attempting to establish herself as having a firmer grasp on the task, and therefore more suitable to the "knower" position. She repeatedly reminded Vivi of the task requirements: applying an emotional appeal, namely humor, (line 69) and finding a target audience (line 76), while at the same time fulfilling the requirements of the task, which was to produce a dialogue (lines 60 and 62). She even appears to scold Vivi for her apparent lack of understanding of what is required in the task (lines 63 and 74). Vivi, on the other hand, was more interested in fleshing-out her own ideas for the action in the ad, rather than immediately creating a situation conducive to the dialogue. Mi seemed to prevail in lines 62-67, with Vivi exclaiming how nice her idea was (line 68). However, in line 70, Vivi proclaimed that she had a "NEW" idea (that is, a *better* idea than had so far been presented), which upon closer inspection was exactly the same idea she had been pushing for since line 57 (using older people in the ad). The following turns display Mi's growing frustration, as she repeatedly challenges Vivi with questions as to the feasibility of her scenario (lines 78-92, Appendix B). Clearly, the power struggles between them had escalated.

Grammar, Usage and Face

In this episode, the students disagreed on some lexical terms during the course of working through the dialogue for the task. The first one was the use of the modal *should* when addressing family members. Mi wanted to address an errant grandfather, saying "we should have a dinner" (see line 90, Appendix B). Vivi, however, believed that it was inappropriate to address

an older family member using *should*. Mi assured her that it was fine, so she decided to let the matter go for a moment. She stood her ground later, however, when conflict arose over the feasibility of the sentence "the dinner will be cold" (line 93), again requiring the teacher's intervention:

93	Vivi:	Hurry. The dinner will be colt.
94	Mi:	Coooked?
95	Vivi:	Colt. Colt. The dinner will be colt.
96	Mi:	Cold?
97	Vivi:	Cold. C-O-L-D
98	Mi:	Huh? Dinner will be ↑cold?
99	Vivi:	No?
100	Mi:	N::o. Dinner will be cold is not good sentence.
101	Vivi:	Dinner will be cold is a right sentence.
102	Mi:	TEACHER.
103	T:	Yeah.
104	Vivi:	Dinner will be cold. Dinner will be cold. Is right [se:ntence?]
105	Mi:	[No, I think] wro::ng
106		sentence.
107	Vivi:	Dinner. will. be. cold.
108	Mi:	Good? Dinner will be cold?
109	T:	Yeah. Dinner will be cold. That's fine.
110	((students begin to write. Silence for 6 minutes))	
111	Vivi:	We need two papers?
112	Mi:	No. One is fine. Yours is good.

As in the previous instance of teacher intervention, Mi calls for the teacher but it is Vivi who actually poses a question to him, taking the floor away from Mi who was next-selected by the teacher. In her presentation of the problem to the teacher, Vivi pointedly repeats the sentence (line 107), as if to avoid any discussion beyond its grammaticality. In the prescribed institutional discourse turn-taking order, when the teacher is given the floor by other-selection, as he was initially by Mi, then again here by Vivi, the teacher has the right and obligation to speak (Makee, 2000). Interestingly, neither student conforms to this prescribed speaking hierarchy, and after each of Vivi's utterances to the teacher (thus, selecting him to speak next) Mi makes her views known that she disagrees with Vivi (lines 105, 108) prior to the teacher's adjudicating turn. Such "please to be heard" acts did not occur in the previous instance of teacher intervention, and may have been a face-saving move. In addition, these out-of-turn sequences are significant in that they violate the preferred institutional discourse protocols and suggest that saving face and one's position in the community, is particularly important to some students — perhaps even more so than other institutionally prescribed power exchange protocols. For Mi, unfortunately, the teacher once again validated Vivi's position – and as in the previous case, his word was regarded as final.

DISCUSSION

As is evident from the data, the two participants worked actively and purposefully to control the

direction of the task. Mi was consistently though reluctantly overpowered by Vivi throughout the interaction, which forced Mi to twice call for the teacher's help in an attempt to establish her own position. However, the teacher, who was not privy to the full dynamics of the conversation, unwittingly succeeded in fortifying Vivi's role, which further alienated Mi. This conversation ended with Mi giving up on co-producing the final product (a written dialogue), and ultimately avoiding Vivi in future pair and group-work activities for the remainder of the semester.

From the *Grammar* segment above, it is not clear why Mi would think this sentence is "not good" (line 100). It may have been that in Mi's mental picture of the story, the dinner is *already* cold, due to the fact that grandpa has delayed everyone from eating (caused by his avid playing of the *Wii*). Although Mi was the one who called on the teacher to help clarify a potential timeline issue, Vivi's addressing the teacher first made the question one about the sentence's grammatical validity and; as the sentence in itself was grammatically valid, the teacher unwittingly reaffirmed Vivi's position. Not knowing what led to the question, the teacher had no way of knowing why Mi might have called him in the first place, and so he simply took the question at face value.

After this final affront to Mi's face and increasingly shrinking stake in the task, the two did not speak again for six full minutes, and instead separately wrote their advertisements. After this prolonged silence, Mi indicated that they only needed one paper to turn in for assessment, and that Vivi's was fine (line 112), without taking the time to even compare the two advertisements, or negotiate a final version. In effect, Mi had completely given up.

Although Mi seemed to have a concise concept of the task and several ideas to contribute, she was willing to let Vivi win in the end, and ultimately produce what was supposed to be a collaborative final product. As a result, the teacher evaluated both students based on a dialogue entirely of Vivi's making. Mi's complete avoidance of encountering anymore disagreements supports Markee's (2000) claim that engaging in repair, particularly with a teacher, can lead to losing face, making students "unlikely to engage in further risky repair behavior" (p. 142). Further complicating the issue was the fact that Vivi's idea was actually taken from an existing television commercial she had seen. The teacher and Mi were not aware of this at the time when the data was recorded.

In previous research looking at teacher intervention in pair-work, the intervening teacher was called in to address repair problems related to production (Mori, 2004) or comprehension (Markee, 2004). However, repair practices are not the only type of risky behavior that L2 students engage in as they navigate their positions in a community of practice. In the data presented above, the conflicts for which the teacher was called in to adjudicate were more confrontational in nature, as they were based on one student feeling that she was right, and the other one wrong. The problems here were not related to negotiation of meaning after a breakdown, and could have easily been negotiated without teacher involvement had the participants been willing to compromise. In effect, one student was explicitly and publically challenging not only the linguistic competence of her partner, but also of the latter's position in the interaction. As such, the decision of the teacher was of great significance to either party in terms of potential for losing face. This high-stakes challenge may explain why, although Mi calls the teacher in both cases, it is Vivi who addresses him with actual questions. It would seem that Vivi had no choice but to make face-saving moves once the teacher was called in. And as in the previous studies, the teacher in this data was not aware of the exact context of the problems that he was called in to address.

The research on group and pair-work, including that with communities of practice and

sociocultural orientations, emphasizes the co-construction of meaning and "mutual engagement" among participants (Hellermann, 2008, p. 9); it is through this interaction that members establish their positions within the learning community. When there is a more capable peer present, it is customary for the "novices" to defer to that member (Hellermann, 2008, p. 14). However, as is seen in the data presented here, both members seemed to jockey for the dominant position. This may have occurred as a result of both members normally occupying the "more capable peer" position in their other pair-work interactions, thus feeling they had already established their position in the community, and were reluctant to give it up to someone whom they did not view as more competent than themselves. The fact that the teacher paired these two students up to work together expressly in the first place somehow supports this view: the teacher probably considered them to be among the most conversationally competent in the class. This is not an uncommon decision from the teacher's perspective.

CONCLUSION

To many teachers observing this pair-work interaction, the lesson may have appeared to be successful: (a) learner participation was balanced overall – the students were using the target language and negotiating repairs on their own, and all pairs produced a final product; (b) the task was effectively scaffolded, and well within learners' language abilities. As a language teacher, having one's students actively engaged in self-directed communication with minimal teacher interference can be extremely satisfying. However, tensions and conflicts can emerge unbeknownst to even the most perceptive teachers. While this study looked only at a single pair-work interaction, it is conceivable that similar power-struggles and conflicts might be present in other pairs. The results presented here, for that matter, should be a caution to teachers as they place their students in pair and group-work activities.

While it is certainly desirable for teachers to be aware of the potential problems that can occur in pair- and group-work settings, it is true that teachers cannot be present to all of the conversations going on in a single language classroom logistically. Seeking to explore possible solutions to avoid such conflicts is certainly desirable; the limited scope of this paper does not allow for in-depth treatment as such, however. As a start, perhaps it is advisable to include issues of pair and small-group dynamics in teacher-training programs, which may raise teacher awareness to some of the potential problems of incorporating more autonomous, communicative methodologies in their classrooms. In addition, overt teaching of participation orientations (Kasper, 2004), group dynamics and social skills (Dörnyei, 1997; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003) could raise student awareness about the common behavioral norms expected of them in small group interactions. This last point is particularly important: after all, in most, if not all, ESL classrooms, there are likely to be students coming from different L1 students, each with their own culturally informed behavioral and linguistic participation frameworks. By being aware of the potential conflicts that may arise from group- and pair-work, and being trained adequately in techniques to avoid them, both the teacher and their students will be better able to foster an environment in which autonomous learning would facilitate language acquisition, rather than shut it down.

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APPENDIX A

Conversation Analysis Transcription Symbols

.	(period) Falling intonation.
?	(question mark) Rising intonation.
,	(comma) Continuing intonation.
-	(hyphen) Marks an abrupt cut-off.
::	(colon(s)) Prolonging of sound.
wo:rd	(colon after underlined letter) Falling intonation on word.
wo:rd	(underlined colon) Rising intonation on word.
word	(underlining)
word	The more underlying, the greater the stress.
WORD	(all caps) Loud speech.
CAP ITALLICS	Utterance in subject's L1.
°word°	(degree symbols) Quiet speech.
↑word	(upward arrow) raised pitch.
↓word	(downward arrow) lowered pitch
>word<	(more than and less than) Quicker speech.
<word>	(less than & more than) Slowed speech.
<	(less than) Talk is jump-started—starting with a rush.
hh	(series of h's) Aspiration or laughter.
.hh	(h's preceded by dot) Inhalation.
[ ]	(brackets) simultaneous or overlapping speech.
{ }	(curved brackets) translation of L1 utterance.
=	(equal sign) Latch or contiguous utterances of the same
(2.4)	(number in parentheses) Length of a silence in 10ths of a second.
(.)	(period in parentheses) Micro-pause, 0.2 second or less.
( )	(empty parentheses) Non-transcribable segment of talk.
((writing))	(double parentheses) Description of non-speech activity.
(try 1)/(try 2)	(two parentheses separated by a slash) Alternative hearings.
$word$	(dollar signs) Smiley voice.

APPENDIX B

College Pair-Work Data

1   Vivi: I think I would like to se:::ll,
2   Mi: Mmmm. I (2.0) I (3.0) like to introduce Hawaii.
3   Vivi: Yeah. I I I want to go ↑Hawaii.
4   Mi: Hawaii ↑honeymoon=
5   Vivi: =how <u>bea</u>utiful.
6   Mi: Hawaii honeymoon and (2.5) [ah::]
7   Vivi: [Sell,]
8   Mi: Sell. Advertise company::y vacation.
9   Vivi: Sell. Sell. You want to sell? ↑Sell something.
10 Mi: Mmm.
11   (5.0)
12 Vivi: People buy some::thing, thi::ng.
13 Mi: What do you mean ↑Something?
14 Vivi: Ah::
15 Mi: Peopl::e buy some[thing.]
16 Vivi: [Wii.]
17 Mi: We?
18 Vivi: Wii. Wii. W-I-I. The the play machine.
19 Mi: Ah [<u>Wii,</u>]
20 Vivi: [Wii,]=yeah.
21 Mi: Where where it is made?
22 Vivi: Ah. Japanese.
23 Mi: Nintendo.
24 Vivi: Nintendo.
25 Mi: [Nintendo.]
26 Vivi: [Nintendo.]
27 Mi: Nintendo. Game ↑company.
28 Vivi: >Yeah yeah yeah yeah<
29 Mi: White color::.
30 Vivi: >yeah< white color::.
31 Mi: Sell a (2.0) a computer?
32 Vivi: Game machine.
33 Mi: Sell game machine. Bu::t name of product we sell is Wii?
34 Vivi: Yeah.
35 Mi: No:: We have to make product. New Product.
36 Vivi: Ah::: No.
37 Mi: We will make something.
38 Vivi: Ah (2.0) well (2.0)
39 Mi: TEACHER.
40 T: Yeah.
41 Mi: We=we will make Ad.
42 T: Yeah=

43 Mi: =For the product.
44 T: Yes. An advertisement for your product.
45 Vivi: If we call, (1.8) It has name. So:: we also have to make a new name?
46 T: It already has a name?
47 Vivi: Yeah.
48 T: You can use the name it has already. What's it called?
49 Vivi: Wii. (2.0) W-I-I.
50 T: Oh Nintendo Wii. Yeah you can say Nintendo Wii.
51 Mi: ↓Ah::
52 T: You're going to sell Nintendo Wii?
53 Vivi: Yeah.
54 T: OK.
55 Mi: ((Writing)) W-I-I.
56 Mi: I think ah:: younger child::=
57 Vivi: =No good. Young child is no good. Older people is good.
58 Mi: Why?
59 Vivi: Hu=hu::mor.
60 Mi: But just playing Wii. We need CONVERSATION for ad.
61 Vivi: ↓Ah::
62 Mi: I see you playing Wii. What are you doing Vivi? I say. Dinner is ready=
63   come on. See=make sentence. [See?]
64 Vivi: [O::h]
65 Mi: Finally family all people play game.
66 Vivi: Yeah=father mother::=
67 Mi: =Finally mother says come on let's play.
68 Vivi: Oh >nice nice,<
69 Mi: Mmm. Humor bu::t conversation.
70 Vivi: ↑Ah. (2.0) I have a NEW idea. New idea. No younger people play the Wii
71   have the older people play the Wii. And the younger people say what
72   are you doing grandpa? Yeah. And grandma grandpa say I play the Wii.
73   Maybe we have an interesting story.
74 Mi: Yeah. Yeah. But Vivi is it advertisement?
75 Vivi: Advertisement?
76 Mi: Yeah:: Vi:vi:: we want to study a::dvertisement. Target audience all that.
77 Vivi: Ah:: ((laughing))
78 Mi: Grandma grandpa, WHO are they, why?
79 Vivi: But very funny.
80 Mi: V:vi: so who are in the advertisement? [Grandmother::?]
81 Vivi: [Grandfather.   ]
82 Mi: Grandfather. father ((writing)) But just playing? We need CONVERSATION.
83 Vivi: OK. So father call to grandfather, we are reedy dinner=come here.
84 Mi: Huh? Reedy?
85 Vivi: We are reedy dinner, come here.
86 Mi: Read? Read?
87 Vivi: No Reedy means. Ah. In the cooking room. Ah. We will eat dinner.
88 Mi: I know.

89	Vivi:	Hurry up grandpa we will eat dinner.
90	Mi:	We will have a dinner=we should have a dinner.
91	Vivi:	No should. I think we are a family. So don't need should.
92	Mi:	Huh? Should is OK. But anyway::
93	Vivi:	Hurry. The dinner will be colt.
94	Mi:	Coooked?
95	Vivi:	Colt. Colt. The dinner will be colt.
96	Mi:	Cold?
97	Vivi:	Cold. C-O-L-D
98	Mi:	Huh? Dinner will be ↑cold?
99	Vivi:	No?
100	Mi:	N::o. Dinner will be cold is not good sentence.
101	Vivi:	Dinner will be cold is a right sentence.
102	Mi:	TEACHER.
103	T:	Yeah.
104	Vivi:	Dinner will be cold. Dinner will be cold. Is right [se:ntence?]
105	Mi:	[No, I think] wro::ng
106		sentence.
107	Vivi:	Dinner. will. be. cold.
108	Mi:	Good? Dinner will be cold?
109	T:	Yeah. Dinner will be cold. That's fine.
110		((students begin to write. silence for 6 minutes))
111	Vivi:	We need two papers?
112	Mi:	No. One is fine. Yours is good.