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**UNDERSTANDING SLA THROUGH PEER INTERACTIONS
IN A CHINESE CLASSROOM: A SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

BY

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DISSERTATION

**Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
In Partial Fulfillment of
the requirements of the Degree of**

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in

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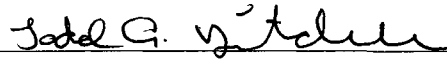
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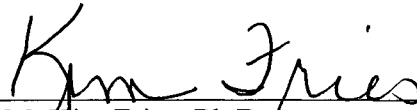
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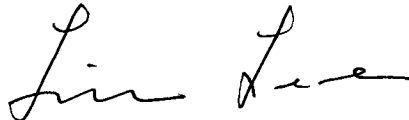
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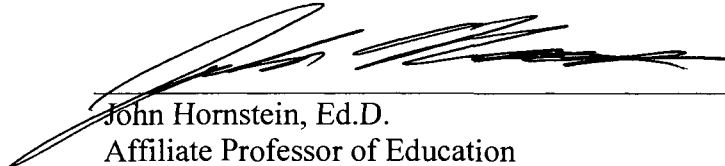
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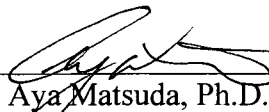
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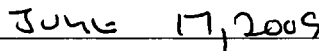
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UNDERSTANDING SLA THROUGH PEER INTERACTIONS
IN A CHINESE CLASSROOM: A SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING SLA THROUGH PEER INTERACTIONS IN A CHINESE CLASSROOM: A SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

By Lei Wu

University of New Hampshire, September 2009

Second language learning and development is a complex process that is situated in sociocultural settings. Classrooms provide such daily life settings in which language acquisition occurs via social interactions among peers and the instructor as well as other mediated means. The purpose of this research study was to examine the roles of peer interaction in a Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) classroom and how different types of peer interaction affect learners' second language development in a classroom setting, and what roles peer interactions played in such a setting. Based on the sociocultural theory, the study explored the opportunities for learning that occurred during peer interactive work. Data included personal history interviews, language reflection journals, audio and video recordings of CFL learners in pair or group work, and Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs). The participants were seven students from different cultural backgrounds in an intermediate Chinese as a foreign language classroom.

Findings indicated that peer interactions played an important role in the Chinese classroom. Mutual assistance in various forms provided various learning opportunities, in which not only the more capable peers assisted less capable

peers, but also the reverse situation occurred in different tasks. The study also revealed the changeable nature of peer roles in their interactive routines, in which learners' perspectives and orientation could be changed during peer collaboration processes, sometimes despite of the learners' original goals. However, although task design may affect the degree of a learner's participation, both motivated and less motivated learners benefited from the participation of peer learning activities in which an unmotivated learner might feel impelled to engage in a shared activity.

The findings of this study support the sociocultural view of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and point to the benefits of assisted performance in second language (L2) peer interaction. These findings also help broaden the understanding of the role peer interaction plays in a second/foreign language classroom. In addition, the results have both theoretical implications as well as practical implications in second language learning and instruction in the classroom.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Learning a foreign language is a complex task because it poses multiple challenges for the learner, such as linguistic, pragmatic, cultural and sociocultural knowledge of the target language. While research in second language acquisition (SLA), especially in the areas of social interaction for second language development, has proliferated in the last decades (e.g., Lantolf, 2000; Long, 1983; Pica & Doughty, 1985), findings are mixed and often inconclusive, leaving many open questions. In addition, most studies to date have been conducted in the areas of western languages, and only recently, studies in second language (L2) research have started to examine classroom interactions in the areas of non-western languages (e.g. Ohta, 2001; Rylander, 2004; Takahashi, 1998), but they are mostly done in college level foreign language classrooms. This study therefore was set to examine peer interactions in a Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) classroom at a secondary level of an independent school in the United States.

In recent years, SLA research has been going through some significant changes that reject a narrowly-framed SLA research model such as the input-interaction-output model (Block, 2003). In the past two decades, this research has encouraged a broader frame that integrates the narrow approach into a

broader sociolinguistically-driven model. According to the perspective stated in National Standards by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Project (1999), students will need to have access to the richness of the cultures of the languages being studied. In addition to the experience with the language system, they need to learn about everyday life and social institutions, about contemporary and historical issues that are important in those cultures, about significant works of literature and art, and about cultural attitudes and priorities. In addition, students should also learn how their own culture is viewed by the people whose language they are studying. This expanded view of language learning undoubtedly challenges the current research agenda in SLA as well as how language teachers teach in the classroom.

There is a growing interest among second language teachers and researchers in understanding how language development occurs through situated interaction in the classrooms. The current literature on second language learners' interactions in the classroom is supported by many studies that examine developmental processes from a holistic perspective as they occur moment-by-moment in the interaction of learners (e.g., Johnson, 2004; Ohta, 2000). However, none of these studies have examined the roles of peer interactions towards learning Chinese in particular and how second language development in this particular language is manifested in such a classroom context qualitatively, especially at a secondary level. Therefore, a qualitative study examining Chinese learners at secondary level could make a valuable

contribution to understanding learners as well as teaching methodologies in teaching Chinese as a second/foreign language in the U.S. school setting.

Theoretical Framework

The L2 classroom is a social context to which learners bring themselves and their past experiences, and in which they establish certain relationships and attempt to participate and engage in tasks in ways that best fit their social needs. Therefore, describing their activities in relation to the other learners as social beings is an important part of the description of their L2 learning. Language is acquired through the use of language in settings of daily life, and L2 classrooms are such a daily life setting in which language acquisition occurs through social interaction. Peer interaction studies emphasize collaborative learning through pair work or small group tasks in the classroom, which has become a focus of many L2 researchers.

Why did I choose to use sociocultural theory to guide my study? While there are several competing theories that underlie SLA, much of the research supports an interactionist position, underscoring the concomitant effects of the external linguistic environment and internal individual learner variables on language acquisition (Ellis, 1994; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). Sociocultural perspectives on language learning, as influenced by the work of Vygotsky (Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Warschauer, 1997), provide a complementary position that considers language learners in direct relation to their social and cultural surroundings and condition. This theoretical background – reflecting both

interactionist and sociocultural perspectives on second language acquisition – was crucial to frame the discussion in attempt to conceptualize SLA in the Chinese classroom. As the questions of this study were closely related to the sociocultural aspects of second language development, especially within the limited classroom environment, it was important to examine the roles of peer interactions holistically, not only looking at the types of peer interactions, but also questioning how language development was manifested through such interactions within this particular second language environment. Understanding the roles of peer interactions in a Chinese as a second/foreign language classroom will inform significantly how teachers can help students from diverse backgrounds interact more productively in the process of learning Chinese as a second language.

Studies in the sociocultural framework support the idea of bringing peer collaboration into the L2 classroom. While these studies are discussed in the next chapter, a few remarks should be made here concerning the selection of Vygotskian sociocultural framework to guide this investigation. According to Vygotsky (1981),

Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition.... [I]t goes without saying that internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions. Social relations or relations among people

genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships (p. 163).

He argues that intrapersonal knowledge and skills originate in interpersonal activity. Based on his theory, learning is conceptualized as development that moves from the intramental (social) to intermental (individual) through transformational internalization (Lantolf & Appel, 1998; Wertsch, 1985). Intermental, however, is not to be interpreted as equivalent to cognitive in the traditional sense, as thinking is not believed to be located solely in the brain. Rather, “the mind extends beyond the skin” (Wertsch, 1991, p. 14). This developmental law may be applied to L2 learning settings because this construct aptly describes interactive processes whereby what was initially social becomes a resource for the individual through the process of meaningful social interaction (Ohta, 2001). Peer interaction in second language classrooms reveals such a meaning making process that is visible to promote language acquisition.

In Vygotsky’s view, just as humans do not act directly on the physical world but rely on tools and labor activity, which allow us to change the world, and with it, the circumstances under which we live in the world, we also use symbolic tools or signs to mediate and regulate our relationships with others and with ourselves and thus change the nature of these relationships (Lantolf, 2000). As with physical tools, humans use symbolic artifacts to establish indirect or mediated relationship between the world and ourselves. This is a rather ambitious yet essential goal, to understand the far-reaching educational implications of the claim as stated in Wertsch (1991). Learning, including the

learning of second languages, is a semiotic process attributable to participation in socially-mediated activities. Additionally, this mediation becomes the eventual means for mediating the individual's own mental functioning. Through socially-mediated activity and the eventual 'individual(s)-acting-with-mediational-means', the social and the individual planes of human psychological activity are interwoven (Wertsch,1993; Wertsch 1998). Understanding peer interaction in a CFL classroom from this perspective means understanding the functional roles of mediational tools within the activity of learning Chinese as a second or foreign language. Thus, learning to speak a second or foreign language, is primarily social rather than individual, like any other human activity.

In order to investigate the roles of peer interaction and the impact it has on L2 development, in the study presented herein, daily conversations in pairs and groups in participants' interactive routines were recorded to provide insight into learners' microgenetic development, which is one of the concepts central to SCT. Arguing that higher mental functions, such as learning, are based on sociocultural history, Vygotsky (1987) proposed four genetic (developmental) domains – phylogenetic, sociocultural, ontogenetic, and microgenetic. The phylogenetic domain is concerned with how human mental functions developed over time to be unique from that of animals. The sociocultural domain concentrates on how different cultures developed into distinct communities. The ontogenetic domain explains how children develop into mature members of society. Finally, the microgenetic domain is concerned with short-term

development in learning a task, or even learning a word. This study investigated microgenetic development of learning Chinese as a second/foreign language both within a few instances (within language-related episodes) and over a period of an academic semester, as students participated in their interactive routines in peer interactions.

Microgenetic development cannot be understood without knowing the context in which it occurs. The context of L2 learning such as the Chinese classroom provides a social place for all the participants to go through a process of incorporating the L2 into their interactive and cognitive processes as they use the L2 with others. All the participants who bring their own experiences of language learning and cultural backgrounds help create a unique learning context. Language learning in this sense is seen not as an individual activity, but as a social one in which learners engage themselves during collaborative activities. How students interact with each other to promote their L2 learning and development is under investigation here. The interacting elements include: each individual's personal history, the interactive routines in the classroom in which two or more students engage, their perspectives through interviews and reflection journals, and their performance in language-related assessments. Another resource available here is the teacher researcher whose involvement plays a part in the context, but will not be discussed extensively here in this document for the purpose of this study.

Most studies in classroom interactions of SLA have been conducted in English as a Second Language or in other western languages on college campuses. This research will contribute to less commonly taught Chinese in a CFL classroom at a secondary level of a U.S. school. Even in less commonly taught languages, many past research studies have focused on pure linguistic aspects such as vocabulary acquisition, role of grammar in second language classroom, and learning strategies. However, the new conceptualization of SLA classroom research calls for a new way to look into second and foreign language data in a more holistic manner within the sociocultural framework.

The sociocultural framework affects research methodology in the following ways: a) Human activity, including L2 learning, is best studied through observation and analysis of verbal interaction during their interactive routines; b) Investigations should take into consideration of a participant's cultural background, learning histories, and the social context in which the interaction takes place; and c) The focus of empirical studies should be on development over time.

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation stems from research findings in the field of SLA and foreign language education, as is more specifically extrapolated in the next chapter. As communicative teaching becomes more important in the language classroom, the field of second language acquisition and teaching is compelled to investigate how second and foreign language learners develop their language

skills through their daily interactive routines in the classroom. The purpose of this study was to examine the different roles of peer interactions and to understand how students co-construct language learning experiences in a Chinese as a second language classroom.

Most of the studies within the work of classroom interactions, as is reviewed in Chapter 2, have examined the role of both teacher-student interactions and peer interactions in SLA. Many have also looked at native-speaker versus non-native speaker (NS-NSS) interactions. However, relatively few studies in this body of literature have examined peer interactions in a less commonly taught language classroom at a secondary level in the U.S. school setting, especially in the field of CFL research. The need for further research into such second language context is important and will shed light on second language acquisition research in general and Chinese in specific.

Therefore, the specific purpose of the present research was to: (a) investigate the role of peer interactions among culturally diverse learners within a CFL classroom, (b) examine the different types of peer interactions, positive and negative, and (c) examine how second language development is manifested through peer interactions.

Research Questions

Main research question:

What roles do peer interactions play in a second language classroom?

Sub-research questions:

1. How do peer interactions mediate second language learning in a Chinese as a second language classroom?
2. How is second language development manifested in peer interactions over the course of the semester?

Significance

As Pica (2005) points out, the theory and practice of second language learning and teaching are dynamic enterprises, subject to continued debate, development, and change. With respect to second language acquisition research, it was hoped that the present research would provide additional information on the nature of peer interactions in the second language classrooms, especially in CFL classrooms. Additionally, it was hoped that the findings from this study would provide a better understanding on the linguistic and social environments of learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, the nature and impact of specific types of peer interactions among these learners, and how second language development is manifested in the interactive routines among these learners. Lastly, it was hoped that this investigation would contribute to the research in second language acquisition in terms of examining peer-to-peer interactions with CFL participants within an educational setting that has not been included in the literature on L2 classroom interaction research.

In addition, in this study, peer interaction was not approached from the traditional input/output model of language that places the process of language

learning within the brain of the individual students. Again, sociocultural theory views learning as a social activity. While researchers who apply sociocultural theory and its research tradition have been productive in the past decade, very few investigations have targeted peer interaction in a CFL classroom from a sociocultural perspective.

Therefore, this study furthers the understanding of peer interactions in a L2 classroom in three ways. First, it offers a principled investigation into a relatively new context of peer interaction among diverse learners of Chinese as a foreign language. Second, it uses sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981) and the related Activity Theory (Leontiev, 1981) as framework for the investigation, thus alleviating theoretical and methodological constraints which have in the past limited traditional second language acquisition research. Finally, it will also give both teachers and researchers a better understanding of the situated processes of L2 development in the classroom, and thus has important implications on practice in the second language classrooms. As Donato (2000) argues, the role of instruction is central to second language development in the classroom. When read and interpreted in light of classrooms, sociocultural theory is both overarching and emerging in its application to language instruction.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study was conducted as a classroom-based case study as this design is most compatible with the research methodology of sociocultural theory (Smogorinsky, 1995). As with all human activity, research is situated in a

sociocultural context. Therefore, the researcher, the participants, and the data cannot be seen as neutral, but rather as interacting elements of the setting.

In undertaking the current study, the researcher made three basic assumptions and identified three limitations. The underlying assumptions regarded the nature of language and language learning in the classroom setting. The first assumption is that language development involves a complex process that is situated in sociocultural settings. Language learners are social beings, and their ability to use language emerges from social interactions, even in the L2 classroom settings.

The second underlying assumption of the present study is learning occurs through the internalization of knowledge when individuals engage in the process of joint creation of meaning and co-construction. It is possible to observe the learning process in the discursive practices between individuals (Harre & Stearns 1995), and thus gain psychological insights through microgenetic analysis. The concept of learning adopted for the present study is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The third assumption is that peer interaction and the learner's environment have important impact on second language development. Within the sociocultural framework, social interaction plays a significant role in second language acquisition. For the purpose of the present study, all aspects fundamental in second language learning, including phonological, morphological,

lexical, and syntactical aspects of language, are to be encountered in examining the roles of peer interactions in the Chinese classroom.

Important limitations of the current study are inherent in the methodology selected by the researcher. First, microgenetic analysis is a form of qualitative enquiry, and as such, seeks to describe specific instances of behavior in limited contexts. The detailed examination of the dialogic processes permits insights into the ways in which learners construct knowledge, and may be transferred to similar situations. However, no claims for generalizability are made.

Second, the analysis here is restricted in time to individual interactions between pairs and in groups in the effort to establish how the conversation is structured and the processes of learner assistance that is observable across pairs or groups within the small classroom environment and therefore, does not make claims for long-term gains in competence.

Finally, the participants in the current study reflected a purposive sample, drawn from a natural level 4 Chinese class at the school where the researcher was teaching. The students were at least at an intermediate or a high intermediate level of a Chinese class. The conclusions, therefore, are limited to the specific type of learners chosen for this particular study.

Definition of Terms

The definitions of relevant terms found in this dissertation are presented below:

Adjacency pairs: An adjacency pair is a unit of analysis within prototypical examples for conversation analysis. Adjacency pairs are sequences of questions and answers as described by Sacks and Schegloff (1973).

Co-construction: Co-construction indicates the joint creation of meaning through dialogic process.

Collaborative dialogue: Collaborative dialogue indicates the interaction between peers when they are engaged in a pair or group interaction.

Conversation analysis: Conversation Analysis (CA) is a method used to examine conversational structure and the practices used among interlocutors for achieving comprehensible communication (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984; Markee, 2000). Within CA sequences of adjacency pairs and initiation/response/follow-up structures were determined.

Corrective feedback: Corrective feedback is a term used to indicate error correction studies by second language teachers and researchers. More specifically, for the purpose of this study, the term corrective feedback is defined as feedback moves that are provided by learner-to-learner interactions or corrective feedback to the group member's errors.

Emic: Using an emic approach, a researcher strives to observe, describe, and understand a phenomenon from the perspective of those involved. Teachers and students have an emic (insider's) perspective on their own classroom. The opposite of emic is etic: the outsider's perspective of a phenomenon.

Error: An error, for the purpose of this study, is defined as a non-target (ill-formed) utterance that is unacceptable in the target language.

Input: The language to which a learner is exposed. Input can be modified to be comprehensible to the learner. It is frequently associated with an information processing view of language, in which language input is processed in the brain.

Internalization: Internalization is a series of transformations through which external activity is “reconstructed and begins to occur internally” (Vygotsky 1978, p.57). It implies movement of language from environment to brain.

Language focused episode (LFE): LFE indicates sequences within a dialogue during which the participants pay attention to the phonological, morphological, syntactical, and lexical aspects of language.

L1: This is an abbreviation for first or native language. In this investigation the L1 of most students is English, but two students' L1 is Korean and one other student's L1 is Hondurian.

L2: This is an abbreviation for second or foreign language. The abbreviation L2 is frequently used in contexts where no distinction is made between foreign and second language learning. Second language learning generally refers to learning a language other than one's native language in a country where that language is the official language, for example, a native speaker of English who is learning Chinese in China.

Microgenesis: Microgenesis is used to indicate “cognitive development that occurs moment by moment in social interaction” (Ohta, 2000, p. 54).

Noticing: Noticing is used to indicate “conscious registration of the occurrence of some event” (Schmidt 1995, P. 29).

Recast: Recast is a reformulation of all or part an ill-formed utterance, excluding the error (Long, Inagaki, & Ortega, 1998; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Mackey & Philp, 1998). Recasts also have been referred to as paraphrase (Spada & Froehlich, 1995), repetition with change, and repetition with change and emphasis (Chaudron, 1977).

Repair: In the field of negotiation of meaning in L2 learning, repair refers to non-understanding that occurs and ends with a resolution of some sort or correction (Kasper, 1985) following some type of feedback.

Peer interactions: Peer interactions in this study indicate all the oral interactions among peers in the classroom such as any learning activities in pairs, triads, small groups, and large groups.

Scaffolding: Scaffolding indicates the process through which an expert guides novice toward greater understandings.

Target language: The target language is the language that the person is learning, and does not include the person’s first language. The first language of the participants in this study varied, but everyone was proficient in English. The target language in this study was Chinese.

Teacher research: In teacher research, insiders study their own professional practice and frame their own questions with an immediate goal to assess, develop, or improve their practice (Zeni, 2001).

Turn: In CA terminology, turns are constructed out of smaller turn constructional units, which may consist of sentential, clausal, phrasal, or lexical objects (Sacks et al., 1974). Speaker-hearers use their knowledge of sentence-level syntax to project when a turn might roughly be coming to a possible completion point and use these hypotheses to determine when they can appropriately start or continue with their own talk (Markee, 2000).

Wh-question: A wh-question is a question that contains an interrogative pro-form. In some traditional grammars, wh-questions refer to 'specific' questions to fill an information gap in a given sentence. Examples of words that begin wh-questions in English are: who, when, where, what, why, and how, and most of them begin with a wh- as illustrated here (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1983).

Zone of proximal development (ZPD): It indicates the psychological space in which the learner moves from his/her actual to potential developmental level through scaffolding.

Chapter Summary and Organization of Remaining Chapters

The present chapter has introduced the current study by considering the background and introducing the theoretical framework. The purpose of the study and the research questions have been delineated, as well as significance, the

assumptions and limitations, and relevant definitions. The next chapter explores the theoretical foundations that inform the research questions, methodology, and analysis. The dissertation then continues with Chapter 3 where the research design, procedure, instruments, data collection, and data analysis are described. The results are reported and presented in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings, discussion, recommendations, and implications.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The current study analyzed the peer interaction among the Chinese learners in pairs and group work in a CFL classroom as they studied the target language in their daily interactive routines. The objectives of the research were to examine the role of peer interaction in second language acquisition in a classroom setting and how learners co-constructed their language learning experiences through these interactions in the given classroom environment. The research questions, the methodology, and the analysis were grounded in the researcher's understanding of language learning and the theoretical framework.

The present chapter reviews the literature that explicates the notion of language learning regarding the two major dimensions labeling SLA: social or cognitive. The section on language learning is followed by an overview of sociocultural theory that informed the current study with regard to second language learning, and of the theoretical background for the role of peer interaction in language learning. The chapter then summarizes some of the studies that contributed to the formulation of the research questions and the choice of the methodology for the present study. Finally, conversation analysis (CA) methodology is reviewed in terms of its relevancy to the current interaction study.

A Brief Look at Language Learning: Social or Cognitive?

For the last few decades, second language research traditions have been influenced by several theories and methods of SLA. A review of recent SLA publications shows a heated debate between cognitive and social theories in the field of second language research. In a special issue of *Modern Language Journal* in 1997, Firth and Wagner's article started a heated and productive debate about the nature of second language acquisition research. The authors argued for a reconceptualization of SLA research that would see and study language as a social and contextualized phenomenon in order to balance the field against approaches that study SLA as mentalistic and cognitive construct. The authors' overall aim was to "examine ... critically the predominant view of discourse analysis and communication within SLA research"(p. 285). They argued that "this view is individualistic and mechanistic, and that it fails to account in a satisfactory way for interactional and sociolinguistic dimensions of language"(p. 285). The authors called for three important changes in SLA: (a) a significantly enhanced awareness of the contextual and interaction dimensions of language use, (b) an increased emic (i.e., participant-relevant) sensitivity towards fundamental concepts, and (c) the broadening of the traditional SLA data base (p. 286). What Firth and Wagner (1997) intended to propose was to reject a narrowly framed SLA research model such as the input-interaction-output model (Block, 2003) for the past two decades, but to encourage a broader frame that

integrates this narrow approach into a broader sociolinguistically-driven model in SLA research.

According to Thorne (2000), the core of current SLA theorizing remains to be cognitive processing and information processing approaches, which consider the individual and his or her language-related mental functions, including short and long term memory issues, language reception and production processes, and so on. These approaches, as he argues, focus on individual performance and abilities, intra-psychological activity, physical science methodologies, and scientific genre presentation of research results. Cognitively-orientated research foregrounds the isolation of variables, favors repeatable experimental design, and may require specific decontextualized and controlled environment. Within classroom interaction research in the field of SLA, starting from the 1980s, a considerable amount of research has been carried out to investigate non-native speaker (NNS) interaction in the second language classroom. Three key concepts emerged from these studies (Krashen, 1985; Long, 1985; Swain, 1985): negotiation of meaning between learners, modifying interaction as a result of feedback from those negotiations, and hypothesis testing of ideal language forms during interaction.

The significance of interaction, termed the interaction hypothesis was first developed by Long (1985), and later revised (Long,1996). It is based on Krashen's influential theories (1985), in which he posits that comprehensible input is an essential and sufficient condition for language acquisition. Here it is

necessary to introduce briefly what Krashen proposes in his theoretical model of five inter-related hypotheses (Krashen, as cited in Block, 2003):

Natural Order Hypothesis: The order of morpheme acquisition is fixed and predictable. It is independent of the perceived difficulty of morphology and independent of how and in what order rules are taught in a formal context.

Acquisition/Learning Dichotomy: There are two ways of developing knowledge of a second language. The first, language acquisition, is a subconscious and incidental process leading to the development of tacit linguistic knowledge. The second, language learning, is a conscious and intentional process leading to the development of explicit linguistic knowledge.

Monitor Hypothesis: Utterances made are a product of the acquisition process. Learned knowledge can only be used as a monitor or check on production. In order for the monitor to be in action, the speaker must have time, a conscious knowledge of the rules necessary to check an utterance, and he or she must be concerned about correct form.

Input Hypothesis: Language is acquired via exposure to comprehensible input, that is linguistic input which is finely tuned so that it is either at or just beyond the speaker/hearer's current state of linguistic development (what Krashen termed $i + 1$)

Affective Filter Hypothesis: Factors such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety may be a factor in SLA but only in the sense that they may cause a speaker/hearer to raise the affective filter and in turn block out comprehensive input.

According to Long (1996), Krashen (1985) is significant because his work advanced research questions by creating a model which was broad enough and at the same time seemed to be all-encompassing, although for Long (1985),

there was a need to break it down into more specific sub-theories in order to get to the researchable questions. While Long (1996) used Krashen's model and further developed it into the 'interaction hypothesis', Swain (1984) argued that Krashen's input hypothesis is "only a partial requirement for language learning; learners also need to be pushed to produce precisely and appropriately the meaning desired" (Swain 1984, p. 252). The inclusion of output to Long's original input hypothesis was also called for by Gass and Varonis (1985), who suggested more studies into the relationship between input and output. Long and others' research (Gass, 1984, 1997; Long & Porter, 1985; Pica and Doughty, 1985) developed three important premises for classroom language learning interaction: 1.) the negotiation of meaning between learners indicates that an individual learner's learning processes are in progress; 2) the modified output that a learner produces during negotiation and after feedback is a sign of a developing linguistic system within the individual learner; and 3) learners undertake hypothesis testing during interaction (Corder, 1981), where they form hypotheses about the formal properties of the language they are acquiring based on input during interaction, which they then test in the form of output. The hypothesis is then confirmed if their output is accepted without negative feedback.

In his later statement of the interaction hypothesis, Long (1996) strengthens the relationship between input and output by claiming,

... negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the NS (native speaker) or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it

connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways (pp. 451-452).

Here Long emphasizes the interaction with a “more competent interlocutor” suggesting that a more competent user of the language can help another learner with the production of more target-like language forms. This idea was also investigated in an earlier series of studies by Doughty and Pica (1984; 1986). Doughty and Pica concluded that negotiation between learners during small group work, with its emphasis on the comprehensibility of message transmission, is a significant factor for language learning through interaction. They explored this further through investigating task variables in 1986, concluding that there was more negotiation of meaning in “two-way” tasks, that is, tasks that require the exchange of information as opposed to the information or opinions being optional in the task.

One problem with these cognitively-oriented studies on interaction is that they only take the speakers into consideration on a specific endpoint which is set to be communication, but development should be multidirectional. As Rogoff (1990) argues, development proceeds in a variety of directions with some important commonalities as well as essential differences in the routes taken toward the goals that are sought in a particular community. When two people are interacting with each other for communication in a second language classroom, not only the speaker’s cognitive abilities, learning style, language proficiency level should be taken into consideration, but also the context and culture that are tied with the speaker because “all humans share a great deal of universal activity

because of the biological and cultural heritage that we have as a species, and at the same time, each of us varies because of differences in our physical and interpersonal circumstances” (Rogoff, 1990, p.11). Therefore, it is essential to understand both the underlying cultural and historical differences of each person and his or her individual ways of thinking in these interactions.

Gass and Varonis (1985) investigated how learners negotiate difficulties in a conversation, based upon variations in the task design. In simulated classroom settings, learners were given one-way and two-way tasks to complete. Although they found no significant difference between the task types, the researchers did conclude that interaction between two NNSs “is a positive variable in interaction because it allows interlocutors to manipulate input” (Gass and Varonis, 1985, p.160). In their analyses, the authors discovered that the extent to which a learner signals that input has not been comprehended or accepted is important. Thus, there is responsibility on the part of the learner to give signals or cues of mis-comprehension. The implications are that strategies for negotiating meaning via comprehensible input may be fruitfully taught to learners of an additional language, and that learners’ propensity to engage in these types of learning strategy needs to be studied. This point is taken up in a review of more recent studies in the next section below. Thus, it may be concluded that from a psycholinguistic perspective, the existing pedagogical arguments for a group work in the second language classroom fit well with findings that negotiation for meanings and interaction modifications are necessary and sufficient conditions

for L2 acquisition, through the provision of comprehensible input and forced, comprehensible output. Messages transmitted by one learner are subsequently modified and improved grammatically and lexically during interaction so that their meaning becomes comprehensible input for the receiving learner. However, does the psycholinguistic view on interaction adequately account for SLA?

Commenting from a sociocultural perspective, Donato (1994) offers the following critique of conventional psycholinguistics: 'underlying the construct of L2 input and output in modified interaction (which is said to foster negotiation leading to reorganization of a learner's interlanguage) is the code model of communication', which presumes that the goal of communicative language use is the 'successful sending and receiving of linguistic tokens' (p.34). This 'conduit metaphor' represents the mind-as-a-container notion of language learning – ideas are objects, language is a container, communication is sending. As some SLA theorists and linguists have pointed out (Donato 1994; Lantolf 1996), this impoverished understanding of communicative processes too often infiltrates the metaphors through which communication is framed. Therefore, this code model of communication places too much emphasis on the formal characterizations of language involving the linguistic competence, especially in Chomsky's (1980) sense, to produce grammatical utterances. While psycholinguistic approaches contribute to the understanding of SLA at several levels, especially in the area of teaching and learning in the classroom setting, they do not fully and adequately account for the second language acquisition process. These approaches to SLA

represent only one dimension of the complex of phenomena and their interrelationships which need to be grouped together under the label of SLA.

How does language learning occur? Let us come back to Firth and Wagner's (1997) thought-provoking piece in *Modern Language Journal*, which started several responses (Kasper 1997; Long 1997; Poullisse 1997; Liddicoat 1997; Rampton 1997; Gass 1998) in the same journal, and other publications (Long 1998; Gass 2000) that were either in line with their views or not. These discussions reveal the need to expand on the theory of learning for SLA, especially the "complementarity of views in a broader church" (Block, 2003, p.106). As Firth and Wagner (1998) respond to the critiques, SLA practitioners should open their conceptual and methodological gates to make "trespassers" welcome. More recently, the growing amount of work around sociocultural theory demonstrates a clear social turn in SLA research.

Vygotsky's (1978) fundamental theoretical insight is that language serves as a means of organizing mental activities. In his view, language regulates and facilitates not only the child's manipulation of objects but also his or her behavior. The main function of speech is to serve as a mediator between two planes: the interpersonal (between people) and the intrapersonal (within the individual). According to this theory, the study of human mental development is the study of how mediated means, which are symbolic and sociocultural in nature, are internalized by the individual. This internalization or appropriation of mediational means is the result of dialogic interaction between children and other members of

their sociocultural worlds such as parents, teachers, coaches, and friends (Johnson, 2004).

Sociocultural research seeks to study mediated mind in the various sites where people engage in the normal activities affiliated with living, so it undertakes to maintain the richness and complexity of 'living reality' (Lantolf, 2000). Second language classrooms are such sites where students and teachers engage in their learning activities in regular school settings. In "Collective Scaffolding in Second Language Learning", Donato (1998) addresses the role of collective scaffolding in the acquisition of French as a second language. The findings of his study reveal that learners themselves could be considered a good source of L2 knowledge. Collectively constructed support provides not only the opportunity for input exchange among learners but also the opportunity to expand the learner's own knowledge. Donato's findings are important because they encourage us to reevaluate the role of input, interaction, and negotiation of meaning as discussed in the original model. The notion that knowledge can be constructed during the process of collaboration with other learners is totally ignored in such models. According to Donato, current perspectives on the role of input and interaction maintain that social interaction supplies linguistic input to the learner, who develops the L2 solely on the basis of his or her mental processing mechanism.

The findings of Donato's (1998) study undermine the view of interaction proposed by Long (1985). As Donato points out, underlying the constructs of L2

input and output in modified interaction is the outdated conduit metaphor model, in which the main goal of the participants in the interaction is a successful sending and receiving of linguistic information. Donato's findings validate the importance of collective scaffolding for the learner's L2 development. His findings, among many others, also show that sociocultural theory proves to be a powerful approach to revealing the details of the everyday development of language learners' proficiency in SLA research.

Sociocultural Theory and SLA

The assumption of the present study was that learning, including second language learning, originates in social practices, as reflected in the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. The following sections: 1) provide an overview of the key concepts in sociocultural theory as they relate to L2 learning and development; 2) review research studies in classroom interaction relevant to the present study; and 3) explore the contribution of conversation analysis (CA) as an approach for data analysis to our understanding of L2 classroom interaction within the sociocultural framework.

Language as a Mediatonal Tool

The most fundamental concept of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is mediated. Wertsch (1991) makes it very clear by offering the following statement:

The basic goal of a sociocultural approach to mind is to create an account of human mental processes that recognizes the essential relationship between these processes and the cultural, historical, and institutional settings (p.6).

In Vygotsky's (1978) view, just as humans do not act directly on the physical world but rely on tools and labor activity, which allow us to change the world, and with it, the circumstances under which we live in the world, we also use symbolic tools or signs to mediate and regulate our relationships with others and with ourselves and thus change the nature of these relationships (Lantolf, 2000). As with physical tools, humans use symbolic artifacts to establish indirect or mediated relationship between the world and ourselves. This is a rather ambitious yet essential goal to understand the far-reaching educational implications of the claim as stated in Wertsch (1991). Learning, including the learning of second languages, is a semiotic process attributable to participation in socially-mediated activities. Additionally, this mediation becomes the eventual means for mediating the individual's own mental functioning. Through socially-mediated activity and the eventual 'individual(s)-acting-with-mediational-means', the social and the individual planes of human psychological activity are interwoven (Wertsch, 1993; 1998).

Language learning falls within what Vygotsky (1978) called "higher order processes," which are unique to human beings. Through observing very young children at play, Vygotsky and his students came to theorize that children talking to themselves while playing are not engaged in what Piaget (1952) called "egocentric speech" that simply accompanies activity without serving any

function, but are rather mediating their activity through speech. Children initially “learn” to play assisted by the social talk of caregivers. Subsequently, they use language imitating social speech as a tool to help play in the absence of the adult’s social speech. Ultimately, as the child gains control of the “game”, he or she is able to play without verbalizing. Lantolf and Appel (1994) describe this process as follows:

Vygotsky saw the transformation of elementary processes into higher order ones as possible through the mediating function of culturally constructed artifacts including tools, symbols, and more elaborate sign systems, such as language. Children learning to master their own psychological behavior proceed from dependency on other people to independence and self-regulation as a consequence of gaining control over culturally fabricated semiotic tools. (p. 6)

Swain (2000) also makes the important observation that language “can be considered simultaneously as cognitive activity and its product” (p. 104). This is a very important point because it highlights the function of language not simply as a medium for meaning transmission, but as an instantiation of cognitive activity. Thus, higher mental processes, such as language learning, can be investigated through collaborative dialogue. This again speaks to the sociocultural perspective of mind that internal mental activity has its origin in external dialogic activity.

Lantolf and Thorne (2006) argue that language is the most pervasive and powerful cultural artifact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other, and to themselves. What about L2 learning? To what extent are we able to use L2 to mediate our mental activity? According to the authors, the primary way in which we use language to regulate our mental functioning is

through *private speech*, in which we appropriate the patterns and meanings of our social speech and utilize it inwardly to mediate our mental activity.

Considerable research has been carried out on the development of private speech among children learning their first language (See Wertsch, 1985).

Beginning with the work of Frawley and Lantolf (1985), L2 researchers have also begun to investigate the cognitive function of private speech in the case of L2 users, especially in classroom settings. Some of the studies in the area of private speech are introduced in the next section.

Internalization and Private Speech

The notion that language acts as a mediational tool in the development of human beings is tied inextricably to the concepts of internalization and regulation.

The shift from the intermental to the intramental plane marks the beginning of the child's control over his or her own behavior – that is, self regulation. The role of language in the appropriation process as the primary symbolic cultural artifact is critical. Thus, cognitive development is a question of individual children gaining symbolically mediated control over, or regulation of, strategic mental processes. (Lantolf & Appel, 1998, p.11)

All learning moves from the social (interpersonal plane) to the individual (intrapersonal plane). This process is also called “internalization” or “appropriation”, signaling the idea of “making it one’s own”. Processes and skills that have been internalized can be used in a self-regulated manner, which characterizes a mature member of society. However, all learning goes through

three stages of regulation: object-regulation, other-regulation, and self-regulation.

This process has been captured by Winegar (1997):

Internalization is a negotiated process of development that is co-constructed both intra- and interpersonally. As such, it is a process of reorganization of the person-environment relationship that itself emerges with person-environment relationships. Through this process, immediate person-environment relationships are reorganized, and some aspects of this reorganization may carry forward to contribute to future reorganization. At least for humans, this process always is socially mediated whether or not other persons are physically present. Some patterns of previous and later person-environment relationships we experience as continuity (p.31).

The important point here is that internalization goes a long way and this process does not preexist inside one's head waiting to emerge at just the right maturational moment. It requires the three stages of regulation for development.

In L2 learning and development, Lantolf (2000) argues that self-talk functions not only as a means to mediate and regulate mental functioning in complex cognitive tasks, but it also serves to facilitate the internalization of mental functions. He proposes that without private speech, language acquisition is not likely to occur. According to Vygotsky, when a child starts to use language for thinking purposes (private speech), he or she has shifted to an intrapersonal psychological plane where the use of speech now functions to help with problem solving and other metacognitive activities as well as for interpersonal functions.

There are a growing number of studies of private speech of L2 learners in recent years. In regarding to internalization as it relates to L2 development, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) describe Spanish private speech data reported by

Centeno-Cortes (2003). Centeno-Cortes recorded the private speech of three advanced learners of L2 Spanish in a classroom setting during a study-abroad semester in Salamanca, Spain. According to the author, although the learners produced private speech with different psychological functions (for example, whispered performance during choral drills, affective markers and task control), by far the most frequent function of the learners' self talk was internalization. One learner produced 134 language-focused utterances, another produced 24 and a third produced only 14 such utterances. Centeno-Cortes includes vicarious response as a separate category. Her motivation for doing this is based on an interview with one of the students who remarked that she did not feel comfortable participating overtly in class activities and preferred instead to respond privately unless called upon by the teacher. The data suggested that vicarious responses might serve internalization function as well.

In Centeno-Cortes (2003) report, her participants focused primarily on phonology, vocabulary, and fixed phrases, with less attention given to morphosyntax. Although the three learners were fairly advanced and one might therefore not expect them to attend to phonology, they noticed distinctive dialectal features of their instructor's speech, which they imitated in their private speech. As for morphosyntax one of the learners is recorded softly practicing the paradigm for the auxiliary verb *haber* ('to have'), frequently used in Spain to express preterit aspect, equivalent to the *passé composé* in French.

Another example from Ohta's (2001) research illustrates her important observation that "private speech reveals how learners may find corrective feedback in unexpected place" (p.163). In the example below, the learner, Km, uses his teacher's utterance as corrective feedback when it was not intended as such.

- T Doko no chizu dseu ka? 'What is this a map of?'
Km Capitorou hill 'Capital Hill'
M Capitorou Hiru 'Captial Hill'
T Un. Kyapitoru hiru no? 'Yes. A what of Capitol Hill?'
Ss Chizu- Kyapitorou hiru no chizu desu 'A map – a map of Capitol Hill'
Km Kyapitorou hiru 'Capitol Hill' [softly to himself]
T Kyapitorou hiru no chizu desu. Un. 'A map of Capitol Hill. Yes.'
(Ohta 2001, pp.163-164)

In this short exchange, Km responds to the teacher's initial question with the correct response uttered using English-like rather than Japanese pronunciation of 'Capitol Hill'. A second student, M, produces the same response, but with appropriate pronunciation of 'hill' in Japanese. The teacher prompts the students to respond in a complete sentence. In so doing, she produces an 'incidental recast' of Km's initial response. Several students respond in chorus with the required complete sentence. At the same time, Km, who does not comply with the teacher's request to produce a complete-sentence response, quietly corrects his initial mispronunciation.

This again shows that private speech plays an important role in L2 internalization. The evidence from these studies shows that imitation and repetition are common to the process. The concept of internalization opened the

door to a totally new definition of learning and the nature of mind. Harre & Stearns (1995) have suggested that there is no inherent central processing mechanism for psychological functions that is context and content independent. It is possible “to discover how the various cognitive skills ... are required, developed, integrated and employed” (p.2) by observing the discursive activity between individuals.

The present study was set to examine the role of peer interaction and its impact on L2 development in the classroom. As the data analysis discussed in Chapter 4 indicates, it was possible to observe the learning process as it took place in the interaction between the participants. The concept developed in sociocultural theory to describe the site of learning is the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Scaffolding and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The concept of **scaffolding** comes from the building construction trade. Bruner (1983) characterizes scaffolding in language development as the adult acting on the motto “where before there was a spectator, let there now be a participant” (p. 60). Language development, in a sociocultural view, is the whole development of the human being; it goes more beyond only skills and knowledge. Rommetvei’s (1974) theory of communication reflects the notion of scaffolding in a broader sense. According to Rommetvei, communication is a co-constructed social process and not an act of simple transmission, and therefore, linguistic interaction is constructive of a ‘temporarily shared social reality’, and, in

reciprocity, such intersubjectivity scaffolds the process of intention-attribution and communicative practice. Descriptions of scaffolding in general in current educational research also focus on what the more knowledgeable other does. More recently, however, some researchers in their studies have tried to reinterpret what is really meant by more knowledgeable other (e.g., Donato, 1994, 2000; Ohta, 2000). For example, Donato (1994) brought up the concept of collective scaffolding, in which peers help each other develop their second language through collaboration on the social plane rather than with a teacher or a tutor. In another study of his graduate seminar class, Donato (2000) examined how a group of graduate students pursuing a doctoral degree in foreign language education made use of their scaffolding experience in collective activities. Through doing research projects, students were able to conceptualize the main constructs of sociocultural theory. He finds that both students and instructor co-constructed understandings and insights on the nature of language learning as a collaborative achievement and the value of sociocultural theory for understanding the powerful relationship between social interaction, social context, and language. Nassaji and Swain (2000) take scaffolding as “the collaboration of both the learner and the expert operating within the learner’s ZPD” (p. 36).

As for the notion of **ZPD**, in Vygotsky’s (1978) view, human action is mediated by technical and psychological tools or signs, such as language, the most powerful of semiotic systems. The mastery of psychological tools mediates the transformation of basic mental functions into higher mental functions such as

involuntary attention, logical memory, formation of concepts, etc. Therefore, the transfer of functions from the social plane to the cognitive plane occurs within the ZPD, which is defined as follows:

The difference between the child's developmental level as determined by the independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

This notion of ZPD has brought forth a number of valuable research studies in SLA. Storch's (1998) investigation into the nature of group collaboration while performing a text reconstruction task found that the selection of an appropriate task has an effect on the nature of group collaboration. In addition, the grouping of students in terms of their language proficiency was found to be an important consideration for the amount of collaborative effort that is produced. In another study, Storch (2000) investigated the nature of peer assistance in collaborative L2 learning and its effect on language development. The finding revealed that collective scaffolding was most evident in the pattern of expert/novice, where both learners co-constructed knowledge through language by offering and giving assistance. In her analysis, Storch states that this was achieved through being involved in rational argument – “deliberations and consideration of alternative views” (p. 34). These findings related to the ‘expert/novice’ dyad are in agreement with the notion of scaffolding in second language learning (Donato, 1994, 2000; Lantolf, 2000) and Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development.

Ohta (2000) investigated what she termed “developmentally appropriate assistance in the ZPD” and found that a learner becomes able to accomplish with ease what she initially could not do without assistance from a more capable peer (p. 75). The most important finding of this study is that provision of developmentally appropriate assistance is not dependent upon attention to what the peer interlocutor is able to do, but also upon sensitivity to the partner’s readiness for help, which is communicated through subtle interactional cues. In this case, meaningful social interaction functions as a mechanism through which the transformation of the L2 occurs. This again demonstrates Vygotsky’s general genetic law of development and ZPD work nicely together to provide a framework that illuminates developmental processes in L2 learners.

Swain (2000) extended her output hypothesis in a study that analyzed dyadic interactions in the classroom from the dual perspective of utterance as a cognitive activity, and utterance as the product of a cognitive activity. She points out:

If we are to understand more fully the language learning that occurs through interaction, the focus of our research needs to be broadened. We need to look beyond the comprehension of input to other aspects of interaction that may be implicated in second language learning(p. 98).

This perspective was originally put forward by Wells (1999, 2000), who claims that the utterance should be viewed as “simultaneously process and product: as ‘saying’ and ‘what is said’ (Wells, 2000, p. 73). Swain (2000)

acknowledges the shortcomings of her and her colleagues' earlier work within the message model of communication framework. In her words,

From a sociocultural theory of mind perspective, internal mental activity has its origins in external dialogic activity... Language learning occurs in collaborative dialogue, and this external speech facilitates the appropriation of both strategic processes and linguistic knowledge. These are the insights that a focus on input or output alone misses (Swain, 2000, p. 113).

Several such studies of observing language development in social interaction have been conducted during the last few years, mostly focusing on understanding the interactional processes among second language learners in classroom situations (Donato, 1994; Ellis, 1994; Ohta, 2000; Takahashi, 1998).

From the sociocultural perspective, the notion of the zone of proximal development is expanded to include peer interaction, in which peers are concurrently experts and novices (Swain, Brooks & Tocalli-Beller 2002). In such interactions, learners jointly construct meaning, which is then internalized in each of the participants. Jacoby and Ochs (1995) coined the term co-construction to describe this process:

the joint creation of a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality. The *co-* prefix in *co-construction* is intended to cover a range of interactional processes, including collaboration, cooperation, and coordination (p.161).

Co-construction occurs through collaborative dialogue, defined by Swain (1997) as "the joint construction of language – or knowledge about language – by two or more individuals; it's what allows performance to outstrip competence; it's

where language use and language learning can co-occur” (p.115). According to Ohta (2001), peers are able to assist each other since they come to each learning situation with different strengths and weaknesses, and thus are able to share their knowledge with one another. In addition, the learners assume different roles when they are engaged in different activities, and through these roles they assist one another. There is no “unequivocal expert” (p.74), but the learners exchange the position of ‘expert’ and novice’ in these learning activities.

Since learning is co-constructed through collaborative dialogue, the process of knowledge construction can be directly observed. Donato and Lantolf (1990) suggested that cognitive processes, since they result from internalization of interpsychological interaction, may be “observed directly in the linguistic interactions that arise among speakers as they participate in problem-solving tasks” (p.85). The current study investigated the role of peer interactions through microgenetic analysis in order to trace the process through which linguistic change occurred in collaborative peer and group interaction. While “the mechanisms of learner assistance have been little examined” (Ohta, 2001, p.74), the present study drew on the relatively recent work of various researchers working within the sociocultural framework (Aljaafreh & Lantolf 1994; Brooks & Donato 1994; Brooks, Donato & McGlone 1997; De Gurrero & Villamil, 2000; Donato 2000; 1994; Markee 2000; Ohta 2001; 1995; Swain & Lapkin 1998;). A few more of these studies, as they relate to the current study, are discussed below.

De Guerrero and Villamil (2000) recorded and analyzed the dialogic interaction between language learners. Their study looked at two ESL learners as they engaged in a task. The task was the revision of a narrative text written by one of them. As in the present study, the theoretical framework was sociocultural theory and the focus was on the ways in which the learners assisted each other, and on the roles assumed by the learners in the course of the interaction. The methodology employed was microgenetic analysis, through which the researchers analyzed “moment-to-moment” changes in the participants’ behavior” (p.51). They used the scaffolding metaphor to denote the assistance the learners gave each other. Scaffolding was operationally defined as “supportive behaviors by which one partner in a semiotically mediated interactive situation can help another achieve higher levels of competence and regulation” (p.56). The concept of semiotic mediation referred to the use of language as a tool for the development of the language.

DeGuerrero and Villamil (2000) expected that the ‘reader’, the participant who was revising the composition created by the ‘writer’, would assume the role of ‘expert’ in the interaction. This turned out to be true in the beginning of the dialogue, but as the dialogue progressed, the roles tended to reverse, with the writer assuming more responsibility and guiding the reader toward additional knowledge.

The unit of analysis in the DeGuerrero and Villamil (2000) study was the ‘episode’, defined as a segment of conversation during which the participants

were on task, that is, dealing with a source of trouble in the composition, or talking about task procedures. The researchers looked for assistance 'mechanisms', which were drawn from categories established in previous research. The categories, adapted from a classification devised by Lidz (1991, as cited in DeGuerrero & Villamil, 2000), included task regulation, contingent responsibility, affective involvement, and instructing. This study is of interest for the current study because of its consideration of the evolving nature of the expert/novice' relation between the learners, and because of its use of microgenetic analysis as its methodology.

Another study grounded in sociocultural theory that analyzed peer interaction was that of Brooks, Donato & McGlone (1997). Like DeGuerrero and Villamil study, the researchers sought selected features of student discourse in their analysis of pair dialogue. They looked at three pairs of third-semester learners of Spanish at the university level engaged in a jigsaw task. The features, identified in earlier research (Brooks & Donato, 1994), were metatalk: the students' comments on their own speaking; task regulation; speaking about what they were supposed to do; use of L1 as a mediating tool; and whispering to the self. Analysis consisted of coding the transcripts for instances of the features that had previously been defined and counting them.

In addition to its being grounded in sociocultural theory and being concerned with peer interaction during a task, the Brooks, Donato & McGlone (1994) study is of interest to the current study because the researchers suggested

that the “purpose of speaking is ... not only for sending messages between people but also as a ‘thinking tool’ as well” (p.526). This suggestion incorporates the view, adopted in the present study, that language as a mediational tool has several functions such as cognitive, creative, and information exchange functions in the interaction of language learners.

Both studies discussed above sought to identify features within the data collected, organizing the data into “episodes” or counting the instances of the features of interest. In the collaborative co-construction of meaning, however, the entire dialogue must be analyzed, as indicated in Ohta’s (1995) study of two learners of Japanese.

In this study, Ohta (1995) analyzed the teacher-fronted and pair work interaction of the two learners in order to learn more about how second language learning occurs in interactive classroom settings. The three findings Ohta reported are important to the current study. First, Ohta observed that the learners actively used and produced more creative language when they worked together than when they worked with the teacher. Second, she found that, although one of the learners was clearly more proficient in Japanese, the roles of novice and expert “are fluid conceptions that vary with the differing expertise of the participants as each peer contributes his or her own strengths to the collaborative construction of the interaction” (pp. 109-110). Finally, the data revealed that when the learners were working together, they used Japanese for a variety of purposes, some of them unrelated to the task set up by the teacher. Only by

looking at sequences of dialogue, rather than at individual features or task-related episodes, was Ohta able to document the instances of meaning-making activity that were not included among previously defined features, or that occurred when the learners were off-task. She found that the learners used and developed their Japanese when they talked about extraneous things happening in the classroom, expressed humor, actively tested hypotheses through language play, and experimented with lexical choice. Ohta's findings support the decision of the researcher of the present study to focus on peer interaction and the roles of collaborative dialogue, and to select language-focused episodes as the unit of analysis, using CA as an approach for the microgenetic analysis purpose.

In a subsequent study, Ohta (2001) examined the interactions over an academic year of a group of students of Japanese as a foreign language participating in a task-based language class. Ohta looked at the role of social interaction in facilitating peer assistance and at the mechanisms of that assistance. Again, she found that "peer assistance is often mutual, with learners helping each other, rather than expert helping novice" (p.76). She also determined that the "power of peer learning is in the maintenance of the learners' joint attention on the interactive task. Joint attention facilitates learning because working memory available for the task is effectively doubled" (p.81). In other words, when learners work together, they are able to pool their individual resources. Working memory is doubled due to the knowledge that each learner

brings to the learning situation, as well as to the dynamic of the interaction. Ohta described the dynamics of the interaction as follows:

When learners work together on a peer learning task, available cognitive resources are effectively doubled – what one student cannot notice, the interlocutor is often able to notice. While demands of production occupy the speaker, the partner is not similarly encumbered, but is free to map along mentally and to project what might be coming next, and thus to provide assistance as needed (p.88).

Microgenetic analysis of the data allowed Ohta to identify various 'assistance mechanism' that the learners employed in their interactions. Among them were waiting, when one partner gave the other time to complete an utterance; prompting, when a partner repeated what the other had said, thus helping the other to continue; co-construction, when the participants contributed syllables, words, or phrases to complete another's utterance; and, repair strategies, when one participant indicated an error in another's speech and suggested correction.

The studies reviewed above aided the researcher in her understanding of the nature of collaborative dialogue in classroom interactions within the sociocultural framework of L2 learning. Taking these important concepts of sociocultural theory one step further, studying peer interactions among learners of Chinese in a high school setting should involve understanding holistically more than the mere language behaviors in these interactions. Activity theory necessitates a research methodology that attempts to understand human mental activity in its natural environment. Learners are viewed within the context of their person histories and in the specific context of the activity in which they are

engaged. The next section takes a closer look at the activity theory and its relevance to the present study.

Activity Theory

Activity theory, according to Lantolf (2000), is a unifying account of Vygotsky's original proposals on the nature and development of human behavior. More specifically, it addresses the implications of his claim that human behavior results from the integration of socially and culturally constructed forms of mediation into human activity. All the important notions within the sociocultural framework come together under the general rubric of activity theory. According to activity theory, any analysis of human mental activity must be carried out in its natural environment, which encompasses natural and culturally constructed objects of artifacts, abstract objects or ideas, as well as the world of other human beings, that is, the sociocultural world. Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) summarized six fundamental principles of activity theory below:

1. The human mind is formed and functions as a consequence of human interaction with the culturally constructed environment.
2. The cultural environment is as objective as physical, chemical and biological properties.
3. Activities are oriented to objects (concrete or ideal) and impelled by motives or needs (physical, social and psychological).
Actions are directed at specific goals and are socioculturally designed means of fulfilling motives. Operations are the specific

processes through which actions are carried out and are determined by the actual conditions in which the activity unfolds.

4. Mental processes are derived from external actions through the course of appropriation of the artifacts made available by a particular culture, both physical and semiotic (signs, words, metaphors, narratives). Internalization is not simply a matter of a verbatim copy of what was carried out, but a transformation of this activity as the mediation becomes private.
5. Mediation through the use of culturally constructed tools and others' voices (or discourses) shape the way people act and think as a result of internalization. The mechanism underlying mediation is a functional organ or system (Luria, 1973, 1979) formed through the intertwining of biologically endowed human abilities and the capacities passed on to us by our predecessors in the form of culturally constructed artifacts of a physical and symbolic nature. For example, we can think of a native or expert user of a language as forming a functional system in which the language ceases to be a tool separable from the person but is so tightly intertwined with who the person is that to interfere in some way with their language is to interfere with the person. On the other hand, second language learners can be viewed as individuals attempting to learn how to use a second semiotic tool

and thus it is much easier to distinguish the person from the tool. Becoming a proficient user of the language from this perspective is about forming a composite functional organ of person-artifact in which one can no longer determine where the person ends and the tool begins or vice versa.

6. To understand human activity, including mental activity, means to know how it developed into its existing form (p.144).

This summary of activity theory provides a clear picture of several aspects of human activity: Need-Object-Motive-Goal-Action-Condition-Operation and their interconnectedness. Although it is not a tidy or static package, it provides the basis for many SLA research studies that seek to understand second language development within the complex matrix of human activity in their full participation.

The present study was designed to uncover the complexity of second language use in a particular sample of Chinese learners, and it has an explicit descriptive purpose. In addition, since the study aimed to analyze the roles of peer interactions in language learning and in the process understand how participants constructed themselves as learners in the L2 classroom context, it needed a theoretical framework that encompasses both issues. Having considered basic tenets of sociocultural theory in general and activity theory in particular, no other current theories can be more appropriate than activity theory as an explanatory framework to explore and understand the learners as human

beings in their full participation of the boarding school life. Activity theory recognizes the culturally and historically shaped nature of human beings as well as that of the various human activities in which they are situated. It allows researchers to examine the second language learners and their second language development in a holistic manner.

A study relevant to *activity theory* is Gillette's (1994) research on learner goals in L2 classroom. Gillette studied six students of French to examine the role of learner goals in L2 success. The participants were all college students, who were selected on the basis of their performance on a set of instruments including a cloze test, an oral imitation task, classroom observation, writing samples and language learning diaries. The study illustrates the point that the participants, whether effective or ineffective, have different personal orientations towards learning French, and their orientations affect their strategic approaches to language learning. In this study, a thorough examination of the participants' social background revealed whether they considered acquiring a second language to be a "worthwhile pursuit or not" (p. 197). This social background, combined with their personal histories, formed the basis for their orientation, which affects their attitude toward classroom learning of French. According to Gillette, the learning of a new language is viewed by the effective learners as personal growth, or as the ability to acquire other "voices", that, in turn, allows these learners to expand their notion of self and increases their potential for self-discovery. On the other hand, the ineffective group of participants viewed

learning French as a requirement. They only needed to pass the course in order to graduate from college. This following excerpt illustrates this point clearly: “I am not a big fan of learning French, or other foreign languages. The reason why I am in this class is to fulfill the language requirement for Arts and Science majors” (p. 198).

This study shows that students’ basic orientation – their attitudes towards learning foreign languages – affects their learning behavior. The effective learners approached all the classroom assignments very differently than did the ineffective learners. They really went out of their way to learn the language, but in contrast, the ineffective learners, because of their different value system and motives, persisted “in their goal to do only the minimum required” (Gillette, 1994, p. 200). Vygotsky’s psycholinguistic theory, with its claim that the initial motive for engaging in an activity is what determines its outcome, provides a useful framework for explaining why it may be so difficult to teach positive language learning strategies to ineffective language learners, and why the isolated use of positive language learning strategies on the part of ineffective language learners rarely leads to success.

The findings of this particular study and the studies discussed above are significant in contributing to both understanding of the relationship between learners’ participation in classroom activities and collaborative interaction, and L2 acquisition processes. They also helped inform the current study on several levels, especially in assisting the researcher to lay the theoretical foundations for

the present study. The present study seeks to see the learners as social beings, who might choose different interactional strategies in carrying out various types of linguistic tasks in the classroom based on their personal histories and the institutional context in which CFL learners worked together to co-construct their learning experiences. Much research interest in Chinese as a second/foreign language specific area has been centered on Chinese phonology, vocabulary acquisition, aspectual system of Mandarin, tones, and other linguistic focuses. Therefore, sociocultural studies of Chinese language learning at secondary level in the U.S. institutional setting could add to the contribution of understanding L2 or foreign language learning and development in the field of second language research significantly.

The concepts and studies reviewed above provide a brief coverage of the important components of Sociocultural theory. Vygotsky argued that situated social interaction connected to concrete practical activity in the material world is at the sources of both individual and cultural development, and in turn, cultural-societal structures provide affordances and constraints that result in the development of specific forms of consciousness (Lantolf, 2004).

Activity theory (Wertsch, 1979) directly addresses the issue of individual development, activity, and the social context. More specifically, it addresses the implications of the sociocultural claim that human behavior results from the integration of socially and culturally constructed forms of mediation into human activity. In its attempt to grasp the nature of activity, activity theory claims that

human purposeful activity is based on motives: that is, socially and institutionally defined beliefs about a particular activity setting (Donato, 1994). Activity theory understands individuals and their goals directed activity as the focus of analysis and the key to transformation and innovation.

As pointed out by Thorne (2005), a distinct difference between sociocultural theory and most other research frameworks is that it does not separate understanding from transformation. Activity theory situates understanding with transformation. It encourages “engaged critical inquiry through which an investigation would lead to the development of material and symbolic-conceptual tools necessary to enact positive interventions” (Thorne, 2005, p.403). In this sense, sociocultural theory and activity theory are embedded in each other in understanding human development.

In peer interaction studies, L2 achievement is not simply a matter of individual skills because learners are social beings embodying the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences of their institutions and cultures. Learners’ participation in the classroom, their appropriation of L2 knowledge, and their ability to expand their learning are all mediated by the concepts and tools of the past and present activities in which they have engaged. Therefore, to understand how students learn a second language requires an analysis of the activity systems in which they are all embedded. Vygotskian argument in the social nature of cognitive development links thought structures of individuals and communities to the social conditions of their everyday practice.

Chapter Summary

The considerations discussed above have laid the theoretical foundations for the present study. The review of literature has provided an overview of the accomplishments and shortcomings of traditional research into L2 classroom interaction and learning. Language is seen as a complex system that embodies cognition and social interaction. While a SCT theoretical as well as a methodological framework has been discussed, this study focuses the lens on peer interactions and L2 development in the Chinese as a foreign language classroom. In addition, relevant studies on classroom interactions as well as peer interactions within the sociocultural framework have been reviewed and the CA methodology in studying and analyzing classroom interactions has been introduced and illustrated in the last section of the literature review.

Based on the considerations of the nature of language learning and the sociocultural framework presented in this chapter, the researcher selected the methodology and created the research design for the present study. This dissertation continues in the following chapter with a description of the methodological issues.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter is a report on the methods used in this research study. It covers the research design, the research site and participants, data collection procedures, instruments, and methods of data analysis of the study.

The overarching purpose of the current study was to examine the different roles of peer interaction and to understand how students co-constructed language learning experiences in a Chinese as a foreign language classroom. At the same time, this study was an attempt to understand learners as social beings in their interactions with others in the classroom. Chapter Two explored the theoretical framework with regard to the nature of second language learning that informed the formulation of the research questions and the choice of methodology. The present chapter elucidates the methodology and the research design.

Research Design

The current study used a mixed-method qualitative study utilizing both microgenetic case study design and teacher research in which the researcher studied her own classroom at an independent college preparatory school in New

England. As defined by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993), *teacher research* is a “systematic and intentional inquiry about teaching, learning, and schooling carried out by teachers in their own school and classroom settings” (p.27). They suggest three different types of empirical research with regard to collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. The first one is to use *Journals* to account classroom life. Journals are accounts of classroom life in which teachers record observations, analyze their experiences, and reflect on and interpret their practices over time. The second type is *Oral Inquiries* in which teachers examine educational issues including students’ work and other data about students. Oral inquiry processes are procedures in which two or more teachers jointly research their experiences in their educational settings. During oral inquiry, teachers build on one another’s insights to analyze and interpret classroom data and their experiences in the school as a workplace. According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993), oral inquiries provide access to a variety of perspectives for problem posing and solving. They also reveal the ways in which teachers relate particular cases to theories of practice. Classroom study is the third type that emphasizes teachers’ explorations of practice-based issues using data based on observation, interview, and document collection. Within the larger umbrella of teacher research, this study was an empirical case study bounded by location (a New England college preparatory school), participants (Intermediate Chinese 4 class students), and time (one academic semester). As defined by Merriam (1998), “a qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single

instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p.27). Stake (2005) argues that “a case is a bounded system and it is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry”(p.444). Yin (2002) further points out that a case study is an empirical inquiry that 1) investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when 2) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

While the use of sociocultural theory has led to significant advances in the study of second language learning, applying it to learning CFL through collaborative peer interactions, represents an expansion into the processes that are not well understood at this time. As has been stated earlier, the theoretical underpinning of this investigation is sociocultural theory, which stresses the importance of studying real people in naturalistic settings. As explicated in the review of literature, research grounded in sociocultural theory often analyzes verbal interaction in small groups or pair learning activities. The process is viewed holistically in the context of the individuals involved.

Clearly, the case study research method is particularly suitable for second language classroom studies. With an intermediate level Chinese class students as participants, the focus was on learners’ everyday interactions in the Chinese classroom, their perceptions of learning Chinese and how their knowledge building in the target language developed through peer interaction over time. All students with different cultural backgrounds in the Chinese class were studied because such a bounded case allowed the researcher to “discover, understand,

and gain insight” (Merriam, 1998, p.61) in depth about the research goals. The criteria for selection was mainly based on the students’ different cultural backgrounds in this particular class and the class size because it would allow the researcher to gain the most out of the participants and learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of this research study. Realizing the multiple realities in case studies, the researcher intended to discern the various perspectives of case participants and herself as a teacher researcher. She understood that her ability to provide a compelling and engaging profile of each student in the case study, with appropriate examples and linkages to her research questions, was very important for reporting objectively the case of learning Chinese as a foreign language.

Qualitative inquiry allows us to gain understanding of the social world through direct personal experiences in real-world settings. Lincoln and Guba (2000) point out that much qualitative research is based on a holistic view that social phenomena, human dilemmas, and the nature of cases are situational and influenced by happenings of many kinds. By choosing all students in the Chinese class as the study participants, the researcher was committed to investigating the complexities involved in the relationships between herself as a researcher and her students as participants in the particular context of a private boarding school. She relied upon formal and informal interviews, participant observations, video-taped peer interactions and classroom activities, students’ reflective journals as well as their class projects for data collection.

The case study was an appropriate method because the research questions posed were of the 'how' and 'what' types of questions; the researcher worked in a natural setting (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), which was her regular Chinese classroom; and the focus was on social processes and meanings that the participants attribute to the contextual classroom learning activities and situations (Burgess, 1985). In addition, the case study approach was applicable because the researcher was able to collaborate intensively with the participants to find out their experiences of learning Chinese in such a context.

Research Setting

The study was conducted at an independent college preparatory boarding school in New England. All study-related elements were integrated into the structure of the section of intermediate Chinese 4 class taught by the investigator during the fall semester of 2007. The school has its unique curriculum for academic courses across the departments of all subject areas, and it also has other residential requirements. The foreign language department offers seven different languages including six different levels of Chinese courses. The foreign language requirement for graduation is three years of the same language, but most students take four years of one language. Some language lovers take two foreign languages if their schedules allow them to do so. The intermediate Chinese 4 course is offered every year, but the enrollment varies each year. A couple of students who register for this particular class are fulfilling their three year foreign language requirement for graduation, but others have decided to

continue with their Chinese studies after their three year requirement at the high school.

In accordance with the departmental philosophy and the ACTFL guidelines for foreign language learning in the 21st century (1999), the class is taught with a communicative orientation towards language learning. The focus is on oral skills, although reading and writing are integrated into the overall curriculum of the course. Even though grammatical content is presented and practiced during teacher-lead segments of the class, pair and group learning activities are conducted during each class period. Students frequently engage in communicative activities such as open conversations, role play exercises, interviews of each other on cultural topics based on scenarios, or peer feedback on oral and written work. In addition to written work such as journal writing, unit tests, and other vocabulary and grammar exercises, students' oral proficiency is evaluated via their oral portion of unit tests throughout the semester and their term project presentations at the end of the semester, consisting of individual as well as partner situations. While oral proficiency interviews were conducted at the beginning of the semester and the end of the semester for comparison and evaluation of their language development during the course of the semester for the research purpose, they were not graded for the course requirement.

The class met four times a week with 55 minutes in length each period. The course structure was largely determined by the unit exams, conducted roughly every three weeks, and project presentations. Each unit exam covers

one thematic chapter, which is covered in a three-week period. The exams are designed to assess students' oral proficiency, listening comprehension, reading and writing skills on the materials covered in the chapter. The design of these exams is primarily based on lexical, structural, and cultural content covered during a particular course segment. The design of projects was intended to integrate students' general knowledge of the language and assess their abilities of doing research, working together with the targeted content materials and with peers, and presenting both orally and in written form effectively on the topic they had worked on.

At the time of data collection, the instructor had taught this particular course several times. In addition to accomplishing the overall curriculum requirements, the researcher had made an attempt to incorporate a large number of communicative activities into the everyday classroom, including the Internet, satellite TV programs, and cultural content in oral learning activities.

Research Participants

After the Drop-Add period, seven students remained in the section of intermediate Chinese 4 class taught by the investigator. Only one student who was from Canada dropped the course after the first week. The class then comprised three female students and four male students whose ages were between 15 to 18 years old. The students were from diverse backgrounds, including four American students with one who had been living in Hong Kong for a number of years due to parents' job requirement, two Korean students with one

from South Korea and one whose family lived in Hong Kong due to father's business requirement during the time when the data was collected, and one Hondurasian who came to the school as a freshman three years prior to the data collection. The class was heterogeneous in terms of prior language learning experience and proficiency level, which ranged from three years of studying Chinese at the same school to several years of studying Chinese and living in Hong Kong before coming to the program. The ethnic composition of the class was also heterogeneous, which was typical for a New England private boarding school which recruits about 25% international students to join the school community. The investigator's other Chinese classes include students from Canada, Japan, EL Salvador, Korea, Singapore, France, and different states of the US. The enrolled students were in general very motivated, and they were all accepted into the school through a competitive admission process.

All seven students who agreed to participate in the study signed informed consent. They also completed the personal history interviews and oral proficiency interviews during data collection. Each student is identified by his or her first name initial of the given Chinese names but two students who had the same first name initial are identified by combining the first two letters of their first names.

Data Collection

Data were collected throughout the Fall semester. During the first week of classes, informed consent was obtained from students enrolled in the course and their parents, and a permission letter was also obtained from the school.

Personal history interviews were conducted during the first and second weeks of the semester outside of the classroom. A semi-structured interview format was selected in which the researcher prepared a list of questions ahead of time (see Appendix D), but was open to asking flexible follow-up questions depending on the conversational flow. All seven students did all the interviews during their free time either in the dorms in the evening or in a conference room during a free block that worked for both the investigator and the student during the day schedule. The video and audio recordings were collected twice a week during their interactive activities, and the interactions among peers in different modes were transcribed for Conversation Analysis (CA). The students were familiar with the format of the routine interactive activities. They either were able to choose the students to be their partners in in-class pair-work or partner(s) who were in the same dorm for after class assignments unless other specific directions were given to the participants for a particular task.

As explicated in the last section of literature review, after reviewing the classroom videotapes, language-focused interactions among peers were transcribed for analysis.

Measures and Instruments

As discussed earlier, within the case study method, the teacher/researcher is the primary instrument. The investigator is both participant observer and instructor of the course. Understanding that data in SLA studies may be somewhat more restricted than other general social science studies and the

analytic focus may be narrower and more technical, the researcher used multiple elicitation tasks, tried her best to establish a trusting relationship with study participants, and obtained adequate relevant background information about the participants. Though it is not possible to standardize all aspects of data analysis before the fact (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996), the data collection was carefully planned and executed via a variety of methods. Some of the data were collected via semi-structured individual interviews and unstructured open-ended interviews, which allowed the study participants to self-report and reflect on their language learning experiences. However, the most substantial data were collected via video and audio taped classroom interactions during the collaborative activities in the Chinese classroom. Each of the instruments is described in more detail in the following sections. In order to answer the research questions, data from more than one instruments were considered to establish triangulation of the data sources.

Table 3.1 Overview of Instruments

Instrument	Data collection	Data generated
Personal History Interview	Audio recording Interview protocol	Personal and Language-learning experiences; cultural background
Oral Proficiency Interviews	Audio recording Video recording	Assist with initial- and final language proficiency assessment
Collaborative Classroom Interactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Conversations • Pair/Triad Work • Role-Play Activities 	Audio recording Video recording Transcription	Positive/negative... mediational tool use, interactional patterns
Reflection Journals	Photo copies	Participant perspective
Course Assessments	Oral exams Term Project	L2 acquisition/ development evidence

Personal History Interviews

Within the framework of Sociocultural Theory, it is important to understand each study participant in the context of his or her personal history. To get a sense of each student's history as a language learner, the investigator conducted a semi-structured one-on-one personal history interview (Appendix D) with each student during the first and second weeks of the semester. The interviews were scheduled at times convenient for the students. Some were conducted in a dorm room where there were no interruptions and others were conducted in a conference room in the library during their free period. They were all recorded

with a digital Sony recorder, and information were entered into an interview protocol table and later transcribed.

A semi-structured interview format was selected in order to allow for a more in-depth and open-ended discussion of students' prior language learning experiences, their cultural backgrounds, and their perceptions of learning Chinese as a foreign language. Each participant was asked the same set of open-ended questions. However, follow-up questions differed depending on the responses provided by the participant. Questions relating to participants' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and their perceptions of learning languages in general, and Chinese specific are provided in Appendix F. Experience in any of these areas has the potential to affect students' choices and learning behaviors in classroom interactions in the CFL classroom. The Personal History Interviews therefore provided background information that informed the explanations of language use, strategic choice, and interaction pattern in the CFL classroom.

Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI)

An interview is a common way of assessing speaking ability in a second/foreign language in the United States and around the world (Johnson, 2001). It is a popular instrument for assessing second or foreign language speaking proficiency in U.S. government institutions such as the Foreign Language Institute and the Defense Language Institute. It is also used by other educational institutions such as the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

In the OPI, the ratings are expressed in global terms. The totality of the candidate's speaking performance is compared to the criteria outlined in the ACTFL proficiency guidelines for each level (See Appendix E). There are six factors that contribute to the candidate's overall speaking proficiency: pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and sociolinguistic/cultural factors. The candidate's level of speaking proficiency is evaluated to reflect his or her ability to integrate all these factors/skills in performing a variety of language functions. According to ACTFL, OPI is a valid and reliable means of assessing how well a person speaks a language.

Since the present study is grounded in the sociocultural framework, it is important to note what theoretical and practical implications of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory for second and foreign language assessment? First of all, from a sociocultural point of view, there is no universal competence. There are only local competencies, which are situated in a variety of social, cultural, and institutional settings. Local competence is acquired through a process of social interaction and through exposure to a wide variety of sociocultural and institutional settings (Johnson, 2001). In considering this perspective, we should start developing models of assessment that reflect local and sociocultural competence. Second, if Vygotsky's framework were to be applied to language assessment, then interaction would have to be viewed as a social, not a cognitive, issue, taking into consideration of the learner's potential level rather than his or her actual level of language ability in a given speech event.

The purpose of doing the OPIs for the present study was to assess the participants' speaking ability in Chinese at the beginning of the semester and the end of the semester and to see if there were any changes in their performance at the end of the study. The initial oral proficiency interviews were carried out with each participant during the first week of the study, and the second oral proficiency interviews were done during the last week of the semester. All the interviews were audio taped and later transcribed for analysis using the ACTFL oral proficiency guidelines. Based on the sociocultural model, the topics of the interviews were on the participants' everyday life at the boarding school – from a sociocultural and institutional perspective. Topics were hobbies, family, academic courses, issues with course work, sports, music, holidays, student issues (dorm life, school rules, etc.) among others – from a local perspective. The participants' speaking abilities varied, and the length of the interviews was between 30 to 45 minutes. The OPIs in the present study were used with other types of classroom assessment for the purpose of triangulation. They provided one type of empirical evidence to the participants' speaking abilities in the target language.

Collaborative Classroom Interactions

Three types of classroom learning activities were collected for the purpose of this study to examine the roles of peer interaction. The first one was *Open Conversations* at the beginning of each class session, which required students to use the target language to communicate about their daily life. Students were

given 8 to 10 minutes to do the warm-up activity at the beginning of each class, and they were videotaped twice a week.

The goal of foreign language teaching is to be able to communicate effectively in that language. Kramsch (1987) points out the need for diversifying group formats and interactional tasks for language instruction. She argues that such diversification aims at providing the learner with a variety of social configurations in which to use the language for various purposes: private or public speech, with focus on the message or on the form, with or without the need to vie for the floor, with or without time limit. Allwright (1984) further points out that these alternatives take into account the “differential uptakes” of individual learners. In such alternatives, learners will process and actualize what they have learned at their own pace, in their own natural order, according to their own agenda of interests and priorities, and in reaction to social contexts that are meaningful to their own experience.

The *Open Conversations* activity was designed to serve such a purpose. A variety of possible topics for these conversations were suggested by the instructor at the beginning of the term to assist the initiation of the communicative activity. These topics included, but were not limited to, school activities, environmental issues, holidays, current affairs, Chinese cultural issues or cultural issues of other countries for comparison, school vacations, sports and games, foods, travel and transportation, and so on. Students initiated numerous conversations that were more relevant to their everyday life in the boarding

school environment. Twice a week the *Open Conversations* were videotaped and selected conversations were later transcribed for analysis.

Video technology allows researchers to capture the nature of the physical setting, the identity of participants in interactions, and many aspects of nonverbal communication such as gestures, bows, and eye contact (Johnson, 1992). In general, video-recording or audio-recording tends to make some people uncomfortable, but in the researcher's classroom, it was and had been a regular activity because the students videotaped their skits and role-plays for parents' weekend, Chinese New Year plays for their annual celebration event with the Chinese Society, and also some oral assignments individually or in pairs/groups on a regular basis, therefore most students were comfortable with the video-recording equipment that sat in the classroom all year long. In terms of technological issues with the video equipment such as quality of sound or videotaping in the classroom, the researcher made sure to set up everything in advance before each session and if anything went wrong, she was able to get help from the Language Lab technician before hand to ensure the effectiveness of the anticipated videotaping sessions.

The second type of interactive classroom activity was *Pair and Triad Work*, which included various face-to-face interactions between peers in pairs or a small triad group in the CFL classroom. The tasks included interviews on characters in the textbook, interviews on particular topics such as personalities, travel, music trend, culture(s), etc., problem solving in grammar, reading, or written work,

creating dialogues on given topics, and vocabulary building activities, and so on. Again, the basic claim from the sociocultural theory is that a great deal of learning is profoundly socio-interactive in nature. Learning is interactive because it is always rooted in activities, in language games, in forms of experience. When we consider these learning activities or tasks from an empirical perspective, we realize that they are interactionally achieved. As in many of these pair or triad work, time and time again participants demonstrated how a simple language task could be realized through collaborative peer interaction.

The third type of interactive activities collected was *Role-play* exercises, which included two different ways of looking at communicative activities. One type of role-play exercises was that students were given a scenario in which they acted out or improvised as they were able to interact in the situation, and the other one was that the participants were given a certain amount of time for preparation on a given topic, or they created on their own with preparation time. Nunan (1999) mentions that role-plays promote creative language use and they have a rich array of language functions that promote negotiation of meaning between learners. Thompkins (1998) also maintains that role playing/simulation is an extremely valuable method for L2 learning. It encourages thinking and creativity, lets students develop and practice new language and behavioral skills in a relatively nonthreatening setting, and can create the motivation and involvement necessary for learning to occur. On the other hand, Al-Arishi (1994) argues that there are some possible componential artificialities of role-playing

which may move it away from the center stage of communicative language teaching. Although role-playing has its limitations, L2 students can experience the target language in context to learning how to interpret and exchange meaning for communication and social interaction. For the purpose of the present study, role-play exercises provided another lens for the researcher to see how learners interacted with each other in these creative learning situations and how their L2 development occurred in their moment-by-moment talk-in-action. All three types of classroom interactive activities were video-taped twice a week for conversation analysis.

Participant Observation

Observing natural communication and interaction in a classroom setting, particularly oral or written interactions among students, is one of the most common and important data-collection techniques in case studies (Johnson, 1992). Participant observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. It provides the context for development of sampling guidelines and interview guides (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999) define participant observation as “the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting” (p.91). During the semester, I observed approximately 40 class periods with the Chinese IV class as the case. As the researcher took the double role of a teacher and a researcher, she could

structure the observation with decisions about when to observe, what issues to focus on, what to look for, and so on with the research questions in mind. Mayall (1999) suggests ongoing consultation with students as the research progresses and using their input on interim findings in the development of later stages of the research. The researcher's role as a teacher researcher allowed her to observe intensively and repeatedly in the classroom, and such participant observation provided more complete data about what happened in the classroom. Her general approach in teaching was interactive, and the long-term active involvement in working with students enabled the researcher to collect rich data. As Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995) have stated, rich data are the product of detailed, descriptive note taking (or videotaping and transcribing) of the specific, concrete events that you observe. So, the ongoing process of notetaking and analytical memos and summaries are of great importance to participant observation method.

Data Analysis

Due to the qualitative nature of this investigation, data analysis was ongoing and iterative. Data collection and analysis were intricately connected, but data analysis continued well after the end of data collection. The precise coding schemes, data displays and interpretational mechanisms were not set a priori but necessarily emerged during the process of data collection and analysis. There are, however, some established procedures that guided the data analysis. Category construction, as Merriam (1998) argues, begins with reading the first

interview transcript, the first set of field notes, the first document collected in the study. The digital audio recordings of the participant interviews were reviewed and transcribed textually, which were entered into an interview protocol table for analysis. The researcher used the summaries of the analysis for the individual participants and compared them for common themes, which would be used to see possible connections to the peer interaction data from the classroom. The same was done for the research goal which was to examine the data from classroom videotaping transcripts, fieldnotes from participant observations as well as the students' class work for peer interaction in the classroom. The initially collected data underwent a process of reduction, during which the investigator selects, focuses, simplifies, abstracts, and transforms the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data displays aid in data reduction and are products thereof. Creating overview tables and categorizing codes representing preliminary findings served as a first attempt to interpret the data and to find ways to communicate these findings to others. Following this model, using charts and summary sheets, the researcher viewed all 20-hour classroom videos to identify language related/focused episodes or speech events which were the major source of peer interaction data for Conversation Analysis (CA).

Transcriptions of Verbal Interactions and CA Methodology

As discussed previously, the primary and most substantive data for the present study were gathered via the three major classroom interactive sources: open conversations, pair/triad work, and role-play activities. The unit of analysis

for determining the process of L2 learning and development was the language-focused/related episodes that provided either positive or negative evidence via peer interactions. The methodology for analysis was the Conversation Analysis (CA). CA has attracted more attention as an approach to SLA research recently (Markee, 1995, 2000). CA is concerned with whether “fine-grained transcriptions [analyzed using CA methodology] would enable SLA researchers interested in understanding the effects on language learning of (a) conversational repairs and (b) conversational input in general to investigate whether the moment-by-moment sequential organization of such talk has any direct and observable acquisitional consequences” (Markee, 2000, p. 42). From a SLA perspective, CA methodology provides a record of input to which participants orient during conversation.

CA methodology was used to examine the classroom interactions and dialogues between speakers in the case of the intermediate Chinese 4 class. Videotaping data of the classroom peer interactions were carefully reviewed first. Selected interaction data were transcribed and analyzed for interaction patterns, level of participation as reflected in the frequency and length of talking in class. In analyzing the data, the researcher was set to examine the relationship among the language of the classroom, the participation structures that exist in the classroom, and student language use and development over the course of the semester. More detailed data analysis procedures are described in the next chapter of the dissertation.

Studying peer interactions in a CFL classroom required researchers to look at the fundamental and multi-layered character of discourse and language learning activities. Language use in social contexts always involves the deployment of linguistic and discourse capacities as well as modes of interpreting and thinking about communicative content and ways of acting adequately within socioculturally relevant interaction, patterns, and communicative cultures (Mondada & Doehler, 2004). If everyday peer interaction is a fundamental locus of cognitive and linguistic development as well as socialization in the classroom, then learning processes of these peer interactions need to be observed within ordinary contexts of classroom routine activities. CA as a powerful approach provides a methodological framework to study L2 within such an empirical setting, concentrating on the organizational details of naturally occurring actions and interactions in the CFL classroom for the present study.

What is Conversation Analysis (CA)? According to Markee (2000), CA is a “form of analysis of conversational data (ACD) that accounts for the sequential structure of talk-in-interaction in terms of interlocutors’ real-time orientations to the preferential practices that underlie, for participants and consequently also for analysts, the conversational behaviors of turn-taking and repair in different speech exchange systems” (p.25). CA, launched by the work of Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Schegloff, deepens our understanding of the methods by which participants structure their action in an accountable way, by showing the endogenous, systematic organization of talk-in-interaction (Sacks, Schegloff, &

Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). CA also deals with the ways in which social order is jointly established (Schegloff, 1991) and shared cognition is continuously generated, maintained, and transformed.

CA methodology is qualitative and thus subject to the usual evaluation criteria for qualitative research. It is radically different from other forms of ACD because it avoids developing its arguments on the basis of any priori theory (Markee, 2000). More specifically, CA is based on empirically motivated, emic accounts of members' interactional competence in different speech exchange systems. CA is also based on collections of relevant data that are excerpted from complete transcriptions of communicative events. Most importantly, CA is capable of showing how meaning is constructed as a socially distributed phenomenon, complementary of the sociocultural framework for the present study.

CA methodology seeks to understand how conversations are organized, the rules by which they are governed, and in this light it is understood that conversation works around a "local management system" where meaning is exchanged and mutual comprehension is accomplished. It focuses on how individuals in social settings engage in meaningful acts through language and make sense of the world around them. In this view, talk is seen as a social action. This is the reason the terms *act* or *action* are frequently used in analyzing a conversation through a CA perspective: language can be used to engage in social actions, and this implies a concern not only for the talk itself, but also for

the context in which it takes place. For researchers whose primary source is conversational data, fine-grained analysis of transcribed audio- or video-taped recordings is necessary. In the case of the present peer interaction study, a CA approach could be helpful in analyzing the different ways in which interlocutors conduct social actions and create meaning through their interactive routines.

Markee's argument for including CA methodology in SLA research is very convincing and it can serve productively to the purpose of the present study on classroom peer interactions. A CA focus compels the L2 research field to pay closer attention to social interaction, consider more critically the use of analytical categories, and produce fine-grained transcriptions of instructional communication. Microanalysis challenges over-simplified views of interaction and discloses learning processes as they unfold. As the field moves toward a more sociolinguistically and socioculturally orientated research, CA's best contribution to SLA perhaps is to shift notions of learning from a predominantly individual psychological phenomenon to an eminently social one, which can be observed in "collaboratively achieved micro-moments of cognition" (p. 33).

Transcription Conventions

The transcription conventions (See Table 3.2) were adapted from the Conversation Analysis (CA) and used to show a variety of characteristics that revealed in the peer interaction data. There are notations used to show volume, rising intonation, pauses, speaker emphasis, false, and overlap indications, and lines to be discussed in the text. Underlining is used to draw the reader's

attention to particular portions of excerpts with researcher's comments listed in double parentheses.

Although transcription may be time-consuming and tedious, it is a necessary part of doing CA. From a practical standpoint, it is the close engagement with the data that enables analysts to know their data in intimate detail. After all, transcripts are designed to represent in a convenient fashion the empirically observed phenomena that are of theoretical interest to the researcher (Markee, 2000). Through the use of English translations of the excerpts and examples, every attempt was made to the readers who are not familiar with Chinese language.

Table 3.2 Transcription Conventions

?	rising intonation, not necessarily a question
!	strong emphasis, with falling intonation
yes.	a period indicates falling (final) intonation
so,	a comma indicates low-rising intonation suggesting continuation
go:::d	one or more colons indicate lengthening of the preceding sound; each additional colon represents a lengthening of a syllable
CAPS	capitals are used to show the speaker's emphasis
T	the teacher in the particular excerpt
(hhh)	laughter tokens
(())	comments about actions noted in the transcript, including non-verbal actions
°°	degree sign indicates reduced volume
→	line to be discussed in the text
—	portion of special note to the current analysis is underlined
(+)	a pause of between .1 and .5 of a second
(++)	a pause of between .6 and .9 of a second

Tracking L2 development

In addressing the research questions, evidence of L2 development and acquisition needs to be attended over the course of the semester. The roles of peer interaction from several different aspects were examined. Excerpts from the corpus illustrating the multiple aspects of L2 development are presented in detail in the next chapter. In tracking the L2 development through the interactive routines as well as other data collection, the procedure is as follows.

First, the classroom verbal interaction data were collected and examined in a chronological sequence. Although one semester might not be long enough to show development, the data from the beginning of the semester was used to compare with the data collected at the end of the semester to show participant language development in Chinese.

Second, the ACTFL proficiency guidelines, *the Standards for Chinese Language Learning* (ACTFL, 1999, See Appendix C) in particular were used for assessment throughout the semester. They served as a guide for lesson planning as well as assessment of students' proficiency level in the five goal areas: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities in foreign language education, and the Chinese language specific standards for sample progress indicators in tracking student progress in Chinese. At the beginning of the semester, the students' performance data in the form of quizzes, oral dialogues, narratives, role-plays and written assignments for their competence in all the five goal areas at this level were collected according to the

proficiency guidelines. At the conclusion of the study, a final term project was used to check their integrated knowledge of the learned vocabulary, grammar, Chinese cultural aspects that incorporated their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to see their language development over the course of the semester.

Ethical Considerations

Besides the ethical issues that IRB guidelines mainly referred to such as informed consent, confidentiality, etc., there were other ethical concerns. Research in a familiar setting and context undoubtedly had its advantages in terms of access to rich data, but it also presented special challenges to the researcher as an insider to manage the distinct intentionalities embodied in the role of such field-based research. How should the researcher balance research commitments with her desire to engage authentically the study participants in her own classroom? Would the shared experience or history at the particular boarding school necessarily confer the capacity to secure more authentic insider perspectives and interpretation of the data? Every coin has two sides, and the role as an insider researcher also has its 'two sides' of the story. The researcher acknowledged that recognizing this fact from the very beginning of the study and maintaining her own integrity as a teacher researcher throughout the research process was the most important to the success of the case study research.

The purpose of the study was to investigate roles of peer interactions and how different types of peer interactions would affect second language acquisition in the classroom setting. This purpose set very specifically what the researcher

needed to attend to in the context of her fieldwork. Since the school setting was seen to naturally lend itself to a more informal, interpretive, and reflective model of inquiry which allowed the researcher to focus on the complexities of social relationships among all the participating members in the classroom and beyond. The required total involvement in students' life on campus both in and outside the classroom was ideal for participatory research, and clearly beneficial to a researcher who shared this experience with her students. She understood being in this context interacting with her students on different levels did not in itself lend to a credible account and interpretation. Her perspectives as a researcher might not necessarily be in agreement with the participants' perceptions of the classroom events or their experiences. However, she acknowledged the complicated aspect of such relationships, understood meanings would emerge through talk, interaction, and action, and their perspectives may change with the influence on both ends in the process. If the researcher was clear about her purpose and sincere about developing a mutual trust with her students, these opportunities would contribute a meaningful understanding of the participants' experiences and their perceptions towards language learning. As a language teacher of 13 years in a boarding school environment, the researcher believed her shared experience and history with these boarding students would in many ways contribute to a more authentic insider perspective and truthful interpretations of the case study proposed.

How the researcher would take her double roles as a teacher researcher in her commitment was another ethical consideration. First of all, at all times, she had a moral and legal responsibility to teach her students, treating them with compassion and creating learning experiences that would be educationally meaningful to them. Given such responsibilities, the quality of teaching should take priority, and the research activities in a way should be commensurable to classroom learning activities, so they would serve the major goal of language learning in the classroom. In turn, the study participants would be more supportive to her endeavor as both a teacher and a researcher. To the researcher's belief, a teacher's passion for teaching and his/her professional standards would present the insider teacher researcher's identity to the study participants. Despite the potential dilemmas, all of these would contribute positively to the more authentic research findings.

Another important ethical concern was to attend to the subjectivity issue during the research process. In qualitative inquiry, it is important to be aware that our fieldwork should have a clear purpose and therefore it will be a selective experience, attending to what is important for the purpose of the study and useful to the study participants. As an insider teacher researcher, especially in a boarding school setting, the data can be overwhelming, so it is crucial for the researcher to be selective in attending to the data collection, finding things that are significant for understanding L2 learners' experiences that are relevant to her research questions. In this process, she needed to attend to the subjectivity

issue. She understood that it was not possible to avoid the subjectivity issue completely in the research process, but there were ways to monitor one's own consideration of subjectivity. Being aware of the subjectivity issue in her insider researcher position, and sharing constantly with study participants from the very beginning helped her monitor her choice making in better understanding the important issues and credibility of the study.

Finally, in terms of the other side of the 'coin', the insider interpretation required the researcher to abdicate her authoritarian role in the investigation. This could be challenging to a teacher-student relationship in a school setting. As a classroom teacher for over 20 years, she may possess certain qualities that were not necessarily in congruence with a qualitative researcher's expected behaviors, in which the power relation and subjectivity issue may emerge in a way that would influence the study participants or the classroom dynamic negatively. Consequently, some study participants might not want to share their true feelings towards certain issues, or might simply want to please her as their year-long classroom teacher. This would affect the authenticity of the data and put the insider teacher researcher at a disadvantage for the purpose of the study.

Another important issue concerned the insider interpretations of the data. Being at the boarding school for many years, some pre-shaped perceptions and beliefs may limit the researcher's understanding of the issues under investigation from a more objective stance. Although changes happened all the time in the process of teaching and researching, the insider's perspectives and

interpretations could be restricted by her personal and cultural background, educational experiences, as well as other factors such as gender, personalities, etc. Of course, the potential dilemmas and pitfalls she would face were not limited to these discussed above, but she also believed that as long as she continued the reflective and dialogic approach to the investigation, the study of investigating roles of peer interactions in learning Chinese from an insider's perspective like this one would contribute positively to the understanding of L2 learning process in the classroom.

Credibility of the Researcher and Role of the Teacher

According to Patton (2002) "... the trustworthiness of the data is tied directly to the trustworthiness of the person who collects and analyzes the data – and his or her demonstrated competence ..." (p.570). In the case of the present study, the researcher was an experienced ESL teacher for many years and a Chinese teacher in boarding schools for 13 years at the time of data collection. She has been involved in the field of second language teaching profession over 20 years, first teaching English at college level in China, and then teaching ESL and CFL in the United States since 1990. Her experience included teaching English at a university in China for seven years, teaching ESL at a public school in the US for 2 years, and then teaching ESL and Chinese for 13 years in a private boarding school in the US. She has also taught ESL in intensive summer programs and actively participated in several professional development programs and workshops both as a participant and a presenter in recent years. In addition,

she received her Master's Degree in TESOL in 1992, and continued to take a variety of graduate level education and research courses after receiving the graduate degree. Her first language was Chinese, and English was her second language. The experience in a variety of language learning situations provided the researcher with experiential insights into the learning process, which were expressed in chapter two of the present dissertation.

This accumulated experience, with the evolution of the conceptual change in her educational philosophy and theoretical foundation over time, prepared the researcher to perform a credible analysis of the data. The adoption of the theory of CA transcription that required the researcher engage intimately with the data ensured that she “return(ed) to the data over and over again to see if the constructs, categories, explanations, and interpretations (made) sense” (Patton, 2002, p570), including sight in collaborative peer interaction in L2 learning.

Sociocultural theory also construes the role of the teacher as clearly facilitative: “intentionally designed learning environments can stimulate qualitative developmental stages” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.207). Although this research was limited to the process of peer interaction in the classroom, and did not include teacher/student interaction, the teacher undoubtedly had an important role to play in such an educational setting. There were several factors concerning the role of the teacher that would affect the peer interaction data. As Ohta (2001) points out, “teaching is situationally driven, tailored to the matters, materials, and time constraints at hand” (p.233). All these factors would impact what happened

during peer interactive learning activities. The instructional design of peer learning activities, for example, would directly affect learners' peer interaction experience in the classroom. How the teacher implemented a peer learning task or how she modeled the process of effective interaction would to varying degrees affect the learners' L2 use in the classroom. In addition, the teacher's training, beliefs, interests, and instructional style would all affect the learners' L2 experience in such a classroom context. Therefore, the role of the teacher in this peer-interaction study should not be completely detached from understanding of the findings, although it was not the focus of this study. Clearly, providing a good model of peer-to-peer interactions was important for learners to establish a meaningful interactive routine in their daily use of the L2 language. When looking at the learners' activities as realized in the implementations of various learning tasks, the role of the teacher would need to be investigated in future studies.

The human activity analyzed in the present study was the interaction between Chinese learners from diverse backgrounds who engaged in their daily routines of learning Chinese as a foreign language in an educational setting. As the locus of meaning making, the dialogic process was mainly the context of learning. The analysis of this process provided insights into the ways in which learners constructed knowledge about Chinese as a second/foreign language. The research design followed closely the philosophical assumptions as outlined in the theoretical framework of the literature review in chapter two and the methodology in the present chapter.

Chapter Summary

The qualitative methodology used in the current study was consistent with the sociocultural theory that guided the researcher throughout the process. This framework includes the conception of language as an interactional system and learning as a socially constructed phenomenon. An overview and a rationale for the mixed-method qualitative study utilizing both microgenetic case study design and teacher research employed in this naturalistic classroom based study were provided in this chapter. The primary measuring instrument is the researcher, who was also the instructor of the intermediate Chinese course that provided the participants for this investigation. A variety of data collection procedures such as interviews, observation, video and audio tapes, and regular course assessments were utilized to allow triangulation. Careful analysis of the transcribed data revealed the processes of learner characteristics in several respects as they participated in their daily interactive routines in the Chinese classroom. The findings are presented in the next chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Overview

This chapter provides information regarding all the aspects of the data analysis and discusses the data in terms of the research questions posited in this investigation. In order to set the stage for the detailed description of data management and analysis, this chapter first starts by presenting an overview of the data collected throughout of the study. Secondly, before discussing the results in relation to each of the research questions, the methods of data management and interpretation will be explained. Finally, in this chapter the various data collected will be used to answer the research questions posed in this study:

Main research question:

What roles do peer interactions play in a second language classroom?

Sub-research questions:

1. How do peer interactions mediate second language learning in a Chinese as a second language classroom?
2. How is second language development manifested in peer interactions over the course of the semester?

The Data

As indicated in Chapter III, data were collected via a personal history interview, two oral proficiency interviews, 20-hour audio- and video recordings of classroom interactions, and the course assessments. The personal history interviews were audio taped and compiled in an interview protocol. The two oral proficiency interviews were audio- or video taped and transcribed for assessing participants' speaking abilities at the beginning and end of the semester. The 20 hour audio and video recordings of classroom interactions were first viewed and roughly transcribed at the end of the semester to identify classroom speech events, each of which being bounded, present from class to class, and the types of peer interaction in particular for the purpose of this study. The course assessments combined with the classroom interaction data were used to examine the L2 development over the course of the semester.

Table 4.1 Peer Interaction Data - Selected transcriptions from the Following Classes

Week	Dates for Classes
1	9/28/07
2	10/2/07
3	10/9/07
4	10/16/07
5	10/23/07
6	10/30/07
7	11/6/07
8	11/13/07
9	11/27/07
10	12/4/07
11	12/11/07

Personal History Interviews

Personal history interviews were conducted at the beginning of the semester. Table 4.2 provides a summary of participants' background information. While this information is presented here as an introduction to the students participating in this research study, it will be discussed in more detail in the data analysis section of this document. The interview questions are provided in Appendix D.

Table 4.2 Summary of Participants' Background Information

P	Gender	Age	Home Language	Nationality	Previous Chinese
JT	F	18	Korean	Korean	3 months tutoring prior 3 years at the school
TW	M	17	English	American	3 years at the school
JM	M	15	English	American Living in HK	3 years in HK/School 2 years at the school
MD	M	18	Spanish	Honduran	3 years at the school
XB	M	17	Korean and English	Korean Living in HK	3 years at the school
XL	F	18	English	American	3 years at the school
PL	F	17	English	American	3 years at the school

Note: P=participant

When reporting prior experience, participants report a wide range of experiences in terms of the following areas: prior experience with Chinese or other foreign

languages, challenges of learning Chinese, views on learning Chinese, class participation, knowledge of China and Chinese culture, family cultural background, and family view of learning Chinese as a foreign language.

JT, an international student from Korea, started to learn English in second grade and studied Chinese for three months prior to her attendance at the current school. She spoke Korean at home and her English proficiency was close to a native speaker of English. JT considered the four tones of Chinese as her biggest challenge, but she was very comfortable in other areas of learning the language. She thought learning Chinese would help her in her career choice after college, so she worked hard in her Chinese class. JT was happy with her class experience with Chinese, but sometimes she felt she might be dominating discussion by always providing answers first. She had been to China for a short family vacation, and she thought she could relate a lot of Chinese things to Korean culture due to their similarities in general. Her family was very supportive of her Chinese studies. Her two younger sisters were also taking Chinese at school.

XB, a 11th grader, was also an international student who was originally from Korea, but his family had lived in Hong Kong for a few years at the beginning of the study. He took Spanish in elementary school and later switched to Chinese upon his parents' suggestion. After a few years of studying Chinese, he felt he hit a block and didn't like the memorization demand of Chinese characters. The reason he took Chinese at the current school was that both his

family and he thought he would have more job possibilities in the future due to China's growth in the world in recent years. His father, a multilingual businessman, was very supportive of XB's learning Chinese and he had led the family to China several times for sightseeing. In terms of his classroom experience, he would like to find a more effective way to learn Chinese characters . He was frustrated and would like to discontinue the Chinese course in his senior year.

MD, an international student from Honduras, spoke Spanish and English at home. He took English in preschool and had been speaking it almost all his life. According to MD, he came from a rich family from Honduras that restricted him to attending to private schools within high walls due to the unsafe environment in his country. He chose Chinese as his language requirement because he wanted to try something different. Prior to taking Chinese, he also took Italian and went to Italy a couple of times in the summer with his stepfather. The biggest challenge in class for him was the oral interaction. In his view, it was very hard to speak Chinese without a natural language environment such as living in China. However, he felt comfortable in interacting with his peers in the class. MD didn't feel that he knew much of the Chinese culture and he was planning to attend the School Year Abroad (SYA) summer program in Beijing the following summer to study Chinese.

JM, a 10th grade American student was the youngest in the class. His family had lived in Hong Kong for several years due to his parents' job

requirement at the beginning of this study. He started to learn Chinese in 6th grade in a Hong Kong international school so he had more exposure to Chinese than anyone else in the class. His older brother graduated from the same school last year and is currently attending Cornell University, majoring in East Asian studies and Business. He had a lot of respect for his brother who was a role model for him and sometimes spoke Chinese with him when they were home during school breaks. JM felt speaking Chinese was the easiest part for him and he always enjoyed conversations. However, writing characters presented a lot of challenges to him as he considered writing and memorizing characters was both boring. He enjoyed living in Hong Kong and wanted to work there in his future as his parents. He felt his knowledge about the Chinese way of living was pretty good.

TW, a senior, was an American student from a small town in Maine. His parents were both college professors. Prior to attending his current school, TW took a little bit of several languages: German, Spanish, and Latin. The reason for him to take Chinese came from his older brother who took Chinese in college and spent time in China. TW felt the most challenging part of learning Chinese was the gap between his understanding the language and the huge efforts put into the real mastery of the language, namely, speaking it with ease. He had never been to China but he would like to participate in a semester abroad program in college. With his early admission into Columbia University in December, he knew he wanted to major in international affairs and learning Chinese would help him in

that endeavor. TW's family was very supportive about his Chinese studies. He said both his father and his brother really "know the value of learning languages" and they always encouraged him to go for something new in his educational experiences.

XL, a senior, was an American student who loved science and sports. She took eight years of Spanish prior to attending the current school. She wanted to try something new so she chose Chinese as her foreign language requirement. XL said she had never been good at languages due to her speech impairment issue, so talking, especially the tones and pronunciation, was really hard for her. However, she always tried her best in class, and very responsible about her work, so her grades were generally in the B range. According to XL, her family had no interest in Chinese or Chinese culture, but they were 'cool' about her choice of learning the language. She considered herself active in class participation although her 'poor ability in speaking' might not help the class. In XL's view, her cultural knowledge about China and Chinese language mostly came from class materials or watching Chinese movies but she realized that there must be more layers to the Chinese culture that she didn't know.

PL, an American student, was a senior and a prefect (student leader) in the dormitory. Prior to attending the school, she took Spanish for three years. She also grew up in a household in which her father and grandma spoke French. PL loved Chinese medicine and working with children. She said she wanted to become a pediatrician, which would make it possible for her love of both

medicine and children. PL's mother was a schoolteacher who would invite PL to teach her young students about China during her breaks. PL went on the five-week study and travel summer program in China after her first year of Chinese studies at the current school. PL enjoyed interacting with peers and the instructor in Chinese. She especially enjoyed the opportunities of talking to native speakers from Taiwan or Hong Kong in her dorm. PL felt that her knowledge of Chinese culture came mostly from her first hand experience from visiting China and her class work such as cultural projects, Chinese movies, and class discussions.

OPI Interviews

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory encourages us to develop new models that focus more on the learner's potential level than on his/her actual level of language ability (Johnson, 2001). If this framework were to be applied to language testing, then interaction would have to be viewed as a social, not a cognitive, issue. This switch from a cognitive to a social perspective requires a greater involvement on the tester's part, which would have to be consistent with the prototypical features of a given speech event. Based on this framework and the ACTFL OPI guidelines (See Appendix E), the OPIs conducted at the beginning and end of the semester would focus on the actual context of the boarding school life. For the purpose of this research, the OPIs were used to assess students' oral proficiency level at the start of the semester and at the end of the semester to see changes developed over the course of the semester. This will be discussed in the section of Research Question 2.

Managing the Data

At the end of the academic semester, before the data analysis started, all 20 hour classroom audio and video taped recordings were reviewed and roughly transcribed for identifying the types of peer interaction that mediate language learning or hinder it. In addition to transcription, two more steps were taken to prepare the data. First, off-task or negative peer interactive actions were identified but eliminated from further data analysis, and second, positive on-task actions were identified according to language-related episodes. Table 4.3 on page 102 provides an overview of the types of on-task actions with more detailed analysis based on the five categories presented in the Table. Table 4.4 on page 154 provides an overview of the types of off-task actions from the data. Each of these steps is rooted in sociocultural theory and Activity Theory and they will be explained in more detail in the following sections.

The Research Questions

The questions posed in this study cannot be answered easily in isolation since they are closely connected to each other. The overarching question “What roles do peer interactions play in a second language classroom?” can only be fully interpreted in conjunction with the two sub-research questions since mediation and strategic patterns in peer interactions are all part of the overall developmental process. According to Vygotsky (1978), social interaction mediates cognitive development. Swain’s (2000) application of this concept to language learning suggests that collaborative dialogues mirror the moments of

language development. Using such a framework, this study identified the language-related episodes and described the characteristics of the peer interactions by seven CFL learners working towards their goals of acquiring Chinese for communication.

The main research question:

What roles do peer interactions play in a second language classroom?

In order to answer this question, the findings from both research question 1 and research question 2 will be used to describe the emerging roles played by peer interactions in the classroom.

Research Questions 1:

How do peer interactions mediate second language learning in a Chinese as a second language classroom?

In order to answer this question, categories of peer interactions that students engaged in to complete different tasks were identified, especially in the five categories of initiating conversations, asking/providing assistance, prompting and modeling, correcting errors, and positive L1 use that all mediate second language learning and development during peer interactive work. The data used to answer this question resided in the transcriptions of the identified routine verbal peer interactions from these categories during open conversations, pair and triad work, and role-play activities.

Research Question 2:

How is second language development manifested in peer interactions over the course of the semester?

To answer this question, the video and audio taped data were analyzed in order to gain insight into each learner's L2 development from peer interactive work. After analyzing all the data, especially based on the findings from Research question 1, a profile of each learner from multiple sources of data was constructed for further analysis to gain a better understanding of how the learner's language learning histories, views on learning Chinese, cultural backgrounds, all together affected their interaction patterns in the CFL classroom, which influenced their L2 acquisition. In addition, a comparison of the two OPIs was analyzed to see changes over time in each learner's oral proficiency level. Multiple data sources were used to gain a holistic picture of each learner and his or her L2 development in the CFL over the course of the semester.

Research Question 1: Peer Interactions and Mediation

Mediation is the central concept of sociocultural theory. Vygotsky's (1978) fundamental claim is that higher forms of human mental activity are mediated by culturally-constructed auxiliary means. According to this theory, these auxiliary means arise as a consequence of participation in cultural activities in which cultural artifacts and cultural concepts interact in complex, dynamic ways with each other. Implicated in the interaction among all of the factors is human

language activity. For this reason, Vygotsky (1978) argues that human consciousness (i.e. awareness of and control over our mental abilities) is mediated through culturally constructed and organized means. With respect to peer learning context, Ohta (1997) in her study found that a learner, Becky, used teacher talk during interaction with peers. While practicing a semi-scripted dialogue and adjusting the content of the dialogue to their own interests, Becky helped her partner with a linguistic problem, using teacher talk to indicate to her partner that his utterance was correct. Although it seemed inappropriate at first glance that Becky used teacher talk, her use of Japanese teacher talk was actually appropriate in the role-play being practiced. Her teacher talk to assist her partner suggests that classroom interactional routines have a positive role in learning the target language. The results of this case study also suggest, according to Ohta (2001), the importance of examining how learners appropriate classroom language in functionally meaningful ways. An established interactive routine in peer learning context promotes the socializing role of peer interaction in the target language and therefore provides opportunities for learners to scaffold their experiences through collaborative interaction with peers.

Interactional Routines in the CFL Classroom

The L2 classroom is a social context to which learners bring themselves and their past experiences, and in which they establish certain relationships and attempt to participate and engage in tasks in ways that best fit their social needs. Thus, describing their activities in relation to the other learners as social beings is

an important part of the description of their L2 learning. Extracting production alone for analysis and ignoring the questions how this is achieved and in what environment, can only be part of the equation, because language learning cannot be separated from the activities for which the language is being utilized as a tool (Atkinson, 2002). Interactional routines, according to Ohta (2001), are meaningful, culturally formulated modes of expression. They serve important functions in the communities in which they are used. Due to their repetitive nature, they also structure the interactive environment in predictable ways; this facilitates language acquisition by promoting the acquisition of relationships between language structure and social meaning. Having the rough transcriptions provided a macro perspective of the classroom learning activities, showing a variety of classroom speech events. The three types of classroom learning activities, namely open conversations, pair and triad work, and role-play exercises, collected for the purpose of this study provided the most peer interactive talk-in-action moments as the learners went through a process of incorporating the L2 into their interactive use with others.

For researchers whose primary source is conversational data, CA methodology allows for fine-grained analysis of transcribed audio- or video-taped recordings that is very necessary for the purpose of this study. According to Pomerantz & Fehr (1997), CA focuses on the unfolding temporal organization of talk co-created through interaction, namely, what participants themselves orient

to during ordinary talk. Human conduct is not defined theoretically but understood in the analysis of “situationally invoked” instances.

From the corpus of the selected data, evidence shows again and again that peer interaction has a facilitating effect on learning Chinese as a foreign language. Based on the summary provided by Table 4.3, the following data sets will show how peer interactions in the CFL classroom mediate L2 learning through collaboration with one another within the zone of proximal development and beyond.

Table 4.3 Types of Positive On-task Actions through Peer Work

Positive On-task	JT	TW	JM	MD	XB	XL	PL	Total
Initiating Conversation	36	17	12	37	6	15	49	172 (24%)
Giving Assistance	54	11	12	13	9	0	15	114 (16%)
Asking for Assistance	0	19	22	21	19	27	17	125 (18%)
Prompting/Modeling	29	15	21	12	12	4	13	106 (15%)
Correcting errors	33	12	9	7	4	3	11	79 (11%)
Positive L1 Use	7	14	17	21	15	19	17	110 (16%)
Total	159	88	93	111	65	68	122	706

Note: Percentages were rounded to the closest percentage.

Initiating Conversations

Depending on the particular task or activity, the demands of language production can be challenging for intermediate and low-intermediate learners. There were 172 combined instances of conversation initiation within peer interactions, mostly during the routine open conversation, pair/triad work, and role-play activities. The open conversation activity was intended to orient the

students to initiate conversations in the target language to communicate about their daily life at the beginning of each class and at the same time provided them with an opportunity to practice (experience) using the language for 'real-life' communication in a foreign language classroom. It was used to start each class with a warm-up free talk session, in which the only requirement for students was to communicate in the target language. However, due to the vocabulary limitation of the learners at this level, code-switching from Chinese to English or back and forth was still common in the data during the open conversation activity. In this whole-class free-talk time, peer initiation of conversation became a very important part of the group communicative activity. We found that all seven learners initiated conversations during such talking time but varied in frequency, PL with the highest frequency of initiating conversations and XB with the least frequency in the data. The learners who started the conversations were not necessarily the ones to maintain the conversation topics when often there was a long pause, another learner would initiate a different conversation topic. It usually followed initiation, response, follow-up (IRF) structure. If there wasn't a follow-up, a different learner may start another IRF sequence. The minimum IRF sequence has an initiation and response turn, but often with an optional follow-up turn. The initiation turn usually follows a question format, but other forms of initiation such as greetings, statements, etc. occurred as well. For the purpose of the topic of conversation initiation, we will focus on the function of conversation initiation phase of the learner interactions in this specific section.

The following excerpts provide examples of conversation initiation during open conversation activity, pair/triad work, and role-plays that have a positive impact on communication in the target language. Excerpt 1 and 2 take the form of questions to start a conversation. Excerpt 3 takes the form of statement on the previous event to initiate a conversation. Excerpt 4 takes the form of greeting the peer to initiate a pair task. Excerpt 5 takes the form of providing suggestions to start a role-play activity. Previous research on L2 learning showed the importance of learner's active engagement with the environment in the process through which language as a social milieu is acted upon and internalized (Van Lier, 2000; Otha, 2001). Using the target language to initiate conversations for social use evidenced learner's intention to communicate with peers. As the learners developed expressive skills to manipulate language forms and functions in initiating conversations, they also became more at ease in maintaining conversations as follow-up turns in the examples illustrated here.

Excerpt 1 and 2 provide a good example of two different learners who used questions to initiate conversation topics that were very relevant to the learners' daily life. MD, in excerpt 1, asked Ni men de zhou mo zen me yang? (How was your weekend?), which was a general question to illicit responses from the group, and received an immediate response from TW. The follow-up turns are all in question format to request for further information. The wh-question in both line 1 and 3 set the tone of the conversation in which learners exchanged ideas about their weekend life at the boarding school. The progress of the

interaction is jointly constructed in this excerpt, first by the initiation of the general how-question followed up by information-seeking questions to maintain the topic, then the responses to the questions to complete the sequence.

Excerpt 1 (10/02/07)

- 1 MD: Ni men de zhou mo zen me yang?
How was your weekend?
- 2 TW: Ah, wo, wo he ji ge xue sheng kan (le) dian ying.
Ah, I, I, and a few classmates go (error: should be 'kan le'=went) to watch (a) movie.
- 3 MD: Shen me dian ying?
What movie?
- 4 TW: Wo men kan (le) um um "Smith Xian Sheng he Smith Tai Tai" (laughing).
We watch ((error: should be 'kan le' to indicate past tense)) "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" (laughing).
- 5 MD: Hao bu hao kan?
(Was it) good to watch? Or (was it) fun to watch?
- 6 TW: Wo xi huan.
I like it.

The second excerpt follows the same wh-question IRF sequence in which PL asked what everyone would be doing tomorrow (Ni men ming tian zuo shen me?) in line 7. Instead of providing a direct answer to PL's question, TW used clarification check question "Ming tian you shen me?" (What is on tomorrow?) to see what was intended in the first question. Although using questions to initiate conversations have traditionally been considered a very teacher-fronted classroom strategy, especially in a second language classroom, it happens more and more in student-centered learning context in recent years. In the process of analysis, when learners did not produce questions or other forms of conversation

initiation, data were analyzed for evidence of progress. For example, XB did not initiate conversations much in the open-conversation group phase during the entire time, but XB in this excerpt participated with follow-up questions in the later part of the conversation but did not initiate conversation topics as in his earlier data (September and October data). However, although he remained to be the least frequent initiator, XB started to initiate more toward the end of the study such as the November data example shown in excerpt 5 below, actually all happening during the last month and half of the semester.

Excerpt 2 (10/19/07)

- 7 PL: Ni men ming tian zuo shen me? Ah::ah:: wan shang zuo shen me?
What are you doing tomorrow? Ah... ah... doing what in the evening?
- 8 TW: ming tian you shen me?
Tomorrow has what?
- 9 PL: Wo men host SPS ((English)) tiao wu (+) zai freeman center ((English)). Suo yi wo yao ni men (++) ni xi huan hen duo de ren? re nao...
We host SPS ((English)) dance... at Freeman center ((English)). So I want you (guys)... you like a lot of people? Lively...
- 10 TW: shi, shi, wo xi huan, yao shi ni xiang qu.....um chuan shen me... (shengyin tai xiao, ting bu jian)
Yes, yes, I like (it)... if you want to go ... um wear what...((voice too low to hear))
- 11 XB: qi guai de yi fu ma?
Strange clothes?
- 12 PL: bu shi, ni chuan shen me ye xing
no, ni wear whatever is okay
- 13 XB: shen me DJ?
What DJ?

In both excerpt 1 and 2, participants used the wh-question format to initiate conversations during the open-conversation activity. In real conversation, topic is negotiated and unplanned. It emerges spontaneously and is locally managed (Johnson, 2001). However, in traditional language classrooms, the teacher holds the sole right to initiate and change topics which hinders the opportunity for students to initiate and develop topics spontaneously. In this open-conversation activity, topics can be negotiated and unplanned among learners without the teacher's lead in direction. Wh-questions are particularly the types that seek information such as 'what are you doing this Sunday?', 'how are you going to celebrate your birthday?' or 'how do you think of last night's dance?', etc. These questions served the purpose of communication in the CFL classroom for the duration of the activity and the active learners who initiated questions constantly helped establish a model for conversations in Chinese for peers in this particular context.

In Excerpt 3 below, PL used a statement to initiate a topic during the open-conversation activity. Even before PL finished, TW used clarification question 'shen me shi hou' (when/what time?) to jump right into the conversation to check what exactly the time was or if she was talking about the time before or after the dance. The 'dance' they were referring to was actually 'Ballet', the Nutcracker 'dance' the school's Ballet company had been preparing for the semester's end performance, and PL was the 'flower' in it, shown in line 11 in PL's response to XL's question 'ni shi shen me?' (What are you?) in line 10. At first glance, this

short exchange might be confusing to an outsider, but to the participants who were living in the boarding school community understood each other and were able to respond and follow-up in a meaningful way. It is evident from this short excerpt that learners are actively engaged in constructing a piece of discourse which, in many respects, resembles a conversation. As far as PL's contribution to this dialogue is concerned, the topic initiation of using a statement had a similar effect compared to questions for turn initiation or follow-up turns.

Excerpt 3 (10/26/2007)

- 11 PL: zuo tian, zuo tian? (+) tiao wu yi hou, ni men ying gai qu
Mem ((English)), ke shi
Yesterday, yesterday? (+) after the dance, you should go to Mem Hall, but
- 8 TW: shen me shi hou?
When (after what)?
- 9 PL: zuo tian tiao wu yi hou
Yesterday after the dance
- 10 XL: ni shi shen me?
What are you?
- 11 PL: wo shi hua? ((rising tone – 2nd tone, correct tone is 1st tone))
the Russian ((English)), hua shi flower ((English)), right?
((English))
I am flower? And Russian. "Hua" is flower, right?
- 12 T: Shei? Ou, hua ((correct tone)) dui, dui, dui.
Who? Oh, hua, yes, correct, correct.

Excerpt 4 shows the opening initiation with a simple greeting before starting a pair dialogue with given questions. XL in line 17 started with 'Ni hao' (Hello) and after a short exchange of greetings in line 18 and 19, she got into the question/answer pair dialogue right away by starting with 'di wu ge wen ti' (the fifth question). After a few short turns, XL in line 25 takes another initiative for a

change, suggesting that her partner XB start ask questions ‘ni yao wen wo? Yi ge wen ti?’ (Do you want to ask me? a question?). It is interesting to note that when given a pair work without assigning specific roles to each learner, students may act very differently. XL took the initiative to start the work, lead the discussion, and again took the initiative to change roles by suggesting a role-switch during the pair work.

Using greetings to initiate conversation is common in real-life settings. In institutional settings like the CFL classroom, greetings also serve the purpose of reciprocity in order for participants to achieve intersubjectivity socially. This is linked to preference organization in CA, in which the preferred action is seen and ‘unnoticed’ (Seedhouse, 2004). When a social actor greets another, a greeting response is the norm. The classroom interactional routines in the CFL classroom allowed learners to perform their social actions, analyze and evaluate the conduct of others, draw conclusions, and hold others accountable in their interactional behaviors. During this process, learners acted with peers by reference to the norms they had established themselves. Common greetings such as ‘ni hao! Ni hao ma? Ni jin tian zen me yang? Ni zhun bei hao le ma?’ were commonly used in conversation initiation data in our investigation, and they followed the IRF structure to maintain the flow of the classroom discourse.

Excerpt 4 (10/23/2007)

- 17 XL: OK, um, ni hao!
Ok, um, hello...
18 XB: Ni hao. Ah (+) ni hao ma?

- 19 XL: *Hello. Ah.. how are you?*
 Wo ye hen hao. Di wu ge wen ti. Ah, Ni ji de ni ma ma de sheng ri shi ji yue ji hao?
I am also pretty good. The fifth question. Ah, do you remember when is your mother's birthday?
- 20 XB: Wo Ji bu de (++) wo ma ma de sheng ri.
I remember not (++) my mother's birthday.
- 21 XL: Ji bu de? Ah (+) ji bu de? don't you say bu ji de?
Remember not?ah... remember not, don't you say 'do not remember?'
- 22 XB: wo bu zhi dao. (hhh) bu zhi dao, wo bu zhi dao wo mama de sheng ri.
I don't know. (hhh) don't know, I don't know my mother's birthday.
- 23 XL: wo ma ma de sheng ri shi:: ba yue:: shi liu hao.
My mother's birthday is 00 August 00 16th.
- 24 XB: ah... ((hesitation))
 ah...
- 25 XL: ah, ni yao wen wo? Yi ge wen ti?
Ah, do you want to ask me? a question?
- 26 XB: ah (++) ni xi huan lu xing ma?
Ah (++) do you like to travel?
- 27 XL: wo xi huan lu xing... ah, ah, da qian nian:: wo qu zhong guo? Ah, ah, shang ge wu nian, wo qu yi da li, wo qu Florida? (hhh), ah, ah, ni ne?
I like to travel... ah, ah, the year before the last:: I went to China? Ah, ah, last five years, I went to Italy, I went to Florida? (hhh), ah, ah, how about you?
- 28 XB: Wo ye xi huan lu xing, ke shi wo (++) um ... (long pause)
I also like to travel, but I (++) um... (long pause)
- 29 XL: Shen me?
What?
- 30 XB: mei you ke yi lu xing. Wo jin nian mei you ke yi lu xing.
Could not travel. I this year could not travel.
- 31 XL: Oh, ZAO GAO! (hhh)
Oh, terrible! (hhh)

In peer learning context which is different from teacher-fronted context, all turns are open to students to use, which potentially provides a setting in which the development of learner's interactional competence may be observed. Excerpt

5 is also from the open-conversation data, in which XB initiated the topic in Yes/No question format. In Line 32, he asked if his classmates went to the dining hall the night before or not. That was the evening International Society, a student organization started the 'chopsticks' in the dining hall day with a feature, once a week to 'make your own stir fry' with all the provided ingredients to choose from. In the early fall data, XB rarely initiated conversations in any format as shown in the previous excerpts, but by the end of October, he started to demonstrate an awareness of using IRF sequence to respond or ask follow-up questions shown in excerpt 2 above. By the mid-November, XB started to initiate new topics during open-conversation activities. Although his frequency was still the lowest, his data show the clear progress of his interactional competence by using questions to initiate new topics in group peer interaction setting such as in excerpt 5 in which he not only initiated the dinner topic, but also helped maintain the topic by asking a follow-up question as shown in line 35 and a follow-up comment in line 37.

Excerpt 5 (11/16/2007)

- 32 XB: ni men zuo tian wan shang qu can ting chi fan le ma?
Did you go to the dining hall to eat last night?
- 33 JM: wo qu le. Wo qu le. Ta men you quai zi!
I went. I went. They have chopsticks!
- 34 XL: oh, dui, wo xi huan kuai zi. Stir fry ((English)) hen hao chi!
Oh, yes, I like chopsticks. Stir fry very tasty!
- 35 XB: ta men de zhong guo fan hao chi ma? Um (++) stir fry?
Chao: chao fan?
Their Chinese food is tasty? Um(++) stir fry, stir-fry: stir-fry rice?
- 36 JM: chao cai! Wo xi huan wo de chao cai, ke shi: ke shi: uh, can ting de zhong guo fan bu hao chi. TAI bu hao chi le!

→ 37 XB: *Stir fry dish! I like my stir-fry dish, but, but, uh, dinning hall's Chinese food is not tasty. Extremely not tasty!*
Yea, wo zhi dao. Ke shi, zhe ge International Society (you) hen hao zhu yi!
Yea, I know. But, this International Society (has) good ideas!

In this excerpt, it is evident that XB's contribution to the conversation is significant in terms of initiating the topic of the new dinning hall feature, follow-up question of seeking opinion on a particular feature of 'stir-fry' offered by the food service, and a comment responsive to the content of his peer's preceding turn. The initiation phase in starting up any conversation appeared to be very important in the CFL classroom as shown in this example, although the discourse is jointly constructed by everyone involved in this particular context. Another observation in this piece is that the fact of XB from a non-participant to a somewhat active participant shows change in one interesting learner in this particular activity over time. From the video data, he often appeared to be uninterested in the conversation when his peers were talking and exhibited minimum participation, but towards the end of the study, XB seemed to be comparatively a little more engaged in oral participation as shown in excerpt 5. One explanation may be that he was 'attentive' in his own manner and his seemingly slow development of interest in engaging in the open-conversation was his way of acquiring the interactional strategies over time.

Analysis of language use in this corpus reveals that participation in routines involving peer use of different initiation strategies is available to all students. This availability does not guarantee that students will all use the

strategies demonstrated by their peers when interacting with the teacher, however, an observation of the seven learners shows that they all used similar interactional strategies in terms of language use in the IRF sequence during these free conversation time. The example shows that XB has developed the ability to use the interactional strategies of initiating conversation and trying to maintain it at a more comfortable level.

Excerpt 6 is another example of conversation initiation in which XL used L1 question format to seek ideas and suggestions from peers of her group for a role-play task as shown in line 38. This is another feature of conversation initiation, usually in task management phase when learners tried to elicit suggestions to get the task started such as this one. In most cases, using English, the L1 to quickly discuss how to start the task was effective because it could get everyone's attention to jump right into the 'task', although code-switching may gradually become an acceptable norm that could sometimes encourage laziness of not using the target language all the time.

Excerpt 6 (11/27/2007)

- 38 XL: OK, does anyone want to be the marriage counselor? Do we want to pretend to be a couple or two separate patients?
Ok, does anyone want to be the marriage counselor? Do we want to pretend to be a couple or two separate patients?
- 39 MD: mei guan xi. Wo jue de JT ying gai dang yi sheng (hhh)
It doesn't matter. I think JT should be the doctor (hhh)
- 40 JT: ah:: well, OK.
Ah:: well, OK.

Conversation initiation data provide evidence that intermediate and low-intermediate learners are able to use different forms of discourse skill to start up, follow up, and maintain familiar conversation topics. Oral participation with peers in their classroom routines provides a range of opportunities for the seven learners to use the target language for communication. The data examined here clearly indicate that conversation initiation in classroom peer interaction is an important phase in terms of establishing a meaningful interactive routine in the CFL classroom.

The findings show clearly that interactional competence could be realized through socially-mediated interaction such as displayed in peer conversation initiation through different discourse types. For example, a learner might be unaware of the interactional strategies as to how to initiate conversations appropriately in the small group setting initially, but over the course of the semester, observation of other peers, effort of trying to respond and follow-up in the conversation, and finally initiating conversational topics in the process as shown in our data. There was evidence of a knowledge transfer from the small group collaborative interaction to subsequent individual performance in using the interactional strategies. Either in a group setting or in pair work, there were always the more capable peers, who demonstrated greater competence to initiate and lead a conversation effectively. This in turn provides an effective learning opportunity and a developmental space for the less capable peers to grow in terms of language use and interactional strategies.

Asking or Providing Assistance

Qualitative review of the peer interaction data reveals that learners ask for assistance or provide assistance to each other. It was common to see the assisted performance among peers in almost every type of learning tasks. However, it is much more frequent in pair or triad work than in the whole group interaction.

We all know that one way students handle problems in peer interactions is to ask the teacher for help, which happens more often than student-initiated assistance if the teacher is conveniently present. However, another way students handle problems is to ask each other directly for help. When pair and group work is used, L2 students often face problems in producing a lexical item or an unfamiliar structure and seek immediate assistance from the other interlocutors. We see this occurs in Excerpts 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

In both excerpt 7 and 8, the question expression *zen me shuo* (how to say) is used to directly request or seek assistance as shown in line 1 and line 3 respectively. The 'zen me shuo' question is considered a formulaic expression. Brouwer (2003) calls the type of expression an 'explicit word search marker' and it demonstrates two different functions: one is a technique used to produce a mutually recognized reference in otherwise problematic talk common in L2 interaction and the other is to request for help. In the data provided here, expressions like this are formulaic devices to appeal for assistance and initiate repair. In Excerpt 7, MD in his turn, line 1, initiated the question "how to say"

when he is experiencing difficulty in producing the adverb 'always' both in speaking and writing, so he used the question followed by another question 'ni ke yi xie ma' (Can you write it down?) to request for assistance in producing the lexical item both in speaking and writing. In this short question/answer adjacency pair, JT in the next turn provides the target vocabulary word both orally and in writing.

Excerpt 7 (10/09/2007)

- 1 MD: Zen me shuo always ((English))? Ni ke yi xie ma?
How to say always((English))?Can you write (down)?
- 2 JT: Zong shi. Zhe yang ((writing the character for MD on a piece of paper))
Always. Like this ((writing the character for MD on a piece of paper))

The following example, Excerpt 8, also contains the use of "how to say" as shown in line 3 when TW initiated the question '*zen me shuo email*' (How to say email?) in his turn. It is interesting to note here that TW's peers were all eager to help, JM started to answer in his turn, line 4, with 'dian zi' (electronic), only the first half of the expression, but got interrupted by another eager helper, XB, who actually provided the wrong second half of the expression with 'dian zi you xi' (electronic game) in line 5. JM quickly corrected XB's mistake by providing the correct second half '*you jian* (mail)' first, then the whole correct expression *dian zi you jian* (electronic mail) in line 6. The goal of obtaining the lexical item 'email' was jointly accomplished through peer assistance.

Excerpt 8 (10/12/2007)

- 3 TW: zen me shuo email ((English – doing his writing))?
How to say 'email'?
- 4 JM: dian zi (++) ((hesitation))?
Electronic (++)?
- 5 XB: dian zi you xi?
Electronic game?
- 6 JM: YOU JIAN. Dian zi you jian!
Mail. Electronic mail!
- 7 XB: Oh, right, I forgot! ((English))
Oh, right, I forgot!

Excerpts 9,10, and 11 provide examples showing that students directly ask for help when they encounter a word or an expression they don't know. In excerpt 9, MD used the question 'hua chuan' is shen me (What is 'hua chuan?') in line 8 to request help in understanding the word, and got an immediate response from JT who provided an answer in English translation with a gesture of rowing in her turn, line 9. In excerpt 10, JT in line 10 initiated a question asking her friends if their 'yesterday' was nicely spent (literal translation) during group free talk time. The response from MD in his turn at line 11 indicates that he didn't quite get the question because he was doing clarification check with his question *zhuo tian shen me* (yesterday what?). After JT repeated her question shown in line 12, MD indicated that he didn't know the word 'guo (to spend)' so that he was unable to answer the question in order to continue with the conversation. JT responded with a direct translation of the word – to spend, which repaired the 'gap' of communication.

Excerpt 9 (10/30/2007)

- 8 MD: 'hua chuan' shi shen me?
'hua chuan' is (means) what?
9 JT: Shi 'row' de yi si ((gesture of rowing))
(it) is (means) 'to row'. ((gesture of rowing))

Excerpt 10 (11/06/2007)

- 10 JT: ni men zuo tian:: zuo tian guo de zen me yang?
You (guys) yesterday... yesterday spent how? ((How was your yesterday?))
→ 11 MD: Zuo tian shen me?
Yesterday what?
12 JT: zuo tian guo de zen me yang?
How did you spend yesterday? ((Literally – how was your yesterday?- Correct sentence))
→ 13 MD: wo bu zhi dao 'guo'.
I don't know (the word) 'guo' (spend).
14 JT: to spend ((English))...
to spend ((English))...
15 MD: Oh, hen hao hen hao. Wo he wo de peng you qu le cheng li.
Oh, very good very good. I and my friend went to town.

It is interesting to note that the instances from the excerpts provided here are mostly examples of learner repair initiation in the on-going vocabulary production or understanding to appeal for assistance. There are instances in other categories such as seeking sentence structure help in pair or group work, which can be seen in other sections of this report, but the most frequent and representative ones are the ones shown here in seeking lexical assistance from the data. Excerpt 11 is another such example in which XL was stuck with the word 'he shi' in the question, and therefore unable to answer the question (line 16) JT initiated in the pair work. XL indicated that she didn't understand the word 'he shi' (suitable) with an 'ah, he shi?' in a rising tone, and JT again provided

assistance with the word meaning in English, so they were able to continue with the dialogue. These direct assistances to one another in pair or group work were common in the CFL classroom from the peer interaction data, which shows mediation in play in collaborative social interaction. The question here is whether these assisted performances have an effect on the learners' language development. By looking at the 'talk-in-action' in the CFL classroom, we found that the learners were able to use the assisted information/knowledge on a particular lexical item or usage to continue with the meaning negotiation process in their collaborative tasks. This dialogic interaction through peer assisted performance seems to have the potential to foster appropriation of linguistic knowledge by individual learners who are unable to accomplish tasks alone but able to accomplish tasks collaboratively with the needed peer assistance through these simple opportunities of exchanging linguistic artifacts.

Excerpt 11 (11/13/2007)

- 16 JT: OK, Ni jue de na ge xin gong yu dui ni he shi ma? Wei shen me?
Ok, do you think that new apartment is suitable for you? Why?
- 17 XL: ah, he shi?
ah, suitable? ((not understanding the meaning))
- 18 JT: like 'comfortable' 'suitable'
like 'comfortable' 'suitable'
- 19 XL: Oh, all right, na ge xin gong yu dui wo, uh:: uh:: hen he shi, um, shi: li xue xiao hen jin.
Oh, all right ((English)), that new apartment for me, uh, uh, very suitable, um, is very close to school.

Excerpt 12 below provides an example of seeking assistance in pair work when encountering a problem with grammar that affected comprehension. TW was the one who initiated a question, but as he was reading the question from the worksheet, he paused to ask for help in line 20. The structure ‘fang de xia’ (verb + de + complement) posed a problem for his comprehension, and he directly asked for help from his partner XB. After a clarification check in line 22, XB provided a simple explanation in line 23 in English without getting into a more explicit explanation about the grammatical usage, but TW seemed to get it and he was able to carry on with his question to continue with the dialogue. Using English to provide assistance is a common negotiation process in L2 classrooms to mend a gap in order to maintain communication successfully. Analysis revealed how peers could provide appropriate assistance when needed in promoting mutual comprehension and L2 development.

Excerpt 12 (11/02/2007)

- 20 TW: zhe ge fang zi fang de xia yi zhang da chi, ah:: zhe ge fang zi fang
 de xia yi zhang da qi... I don't know what this means, do you know what this means? ((English))
This room this room is able to have a large bed ((inaccurate pronunciation – should be ‘da chuang’)), ah, this room is able to have a large bed... I don't know what this means, do you know what this means?
- 21 XB: which one?
Which one?
- 22 TW: number 5
Number 5
- 23 XB: ah, so like, this this room like can you place a bed,
Ah, so like, this this room like can you place a bed,
- 24 TW: put a bed in it?

- 25 XB: *Put a bed in it?*
yea...
Yea...
- 26 TW: Oh, all right, zhe ge fang jian, zhe ge fang jian ke yi fang le yi ge qi chuang, yi ge da qi. Qing wen, zu zhe ge fang zi yao bu yao ya jin? Ya jin duo shao qian?
Oh, all right, this room, this room can place a large bed, a large bed ((wrong pronunciation again)). May I ask, do you need a deposit to rent this room? How much is the deposit?

These data provide clear evidence that learners do appeal for assistance or provide assistance in peer learning context in the CFL classroom. While these examples illustrate clearly that learners ask or provide direct assistance to peers when needed, other types of assistance such as prompting, modeling, correcting each other's errors are also seen in peer interaction from time to time in the data. Examples are provided in the following sections of this report.

Prompting and Modeling

In peer interaction, when a learner encounters difficulty in producing utterances, peers may wait for the speaker to continue or they may help with their interlocutor to continue by prompting or modeling. Prompting and modeling are also ways of assistance provided as learners attend to the ongoing interaction in the peer-learning context. As shown below, learners use these methods to help their partners move ahead or complete the conversation collaboratively. Prompting or modeling appears in peer learning context frequently when learners make a mistake or struggle to complete an utterance as shown in the following examples.

Excerpt 13 (11/27/2007)

- 1 MD: Da qian tian de wan hui hen wanr?
The day before yesterday's party very fun ((error: wanr should be hao waner - fun))?
- 2 PL: Oh, hen hao wanr.
Oh, (it's) really fun ((corret form – fun)).
- 3 MD: e, dui le, hen hao wanr. Wo xi wang xia ge xing qi liu de ye hen hao wanr.
E, dui le, really fun. I hope next Saturday's (wan hui) is really fun, too.

In excerpt 13 above, MD in line 1 initiated a question with an error expression in it: *hen wanr* instead of the correct form *hen hao wanr*, and PL in her response to the question used the correct form *hen hao wanr*, which in turn got MD's notice of his own incorrect use of the expression. Consequently, in the process of carrying on with the conversation, MD in his turn, line 3, said the correct form, and again in his next part of the response said the correct form again in his comment on next Saturday's party. This indicates that MD noticed his own error in his production from PL's modeling of the correct form in her turn of the talk, so MD made an effort to use it correctly in the subsequent turns. Conversation analysis research has shown in great detail the work that listeners do, repeatedly demonstrating how attentional processes are realized in conversation. Noticing is the first step in the language acquisition process. According to Gass (1997), all the input to which learners are exposed does not automatically become available to them. Learners must consciously notice that there is a gap between their present knowledge of the L2 and information contained in the input they're hearing or reading. However, learners may notice

this gap for many different reasons. Learners, for example, may notice an item if it is particularly frequent in the input, or conversely, because the occurrence of this item is so rare that it sticks out from the surrounding language. Learners may also notice a gap based on their prior knowledge of how the L2 works in general or how similarly a particular L2 (e.g., Italian) functions in comparison with a typologically close third language (e.g., Spanish) (Markee, 2000). Therefore, the example in excerpt 13 shows the noticing of the learner through his peer's prompting and modeling, and therefore the consequent repair followed. However, the example doesn't demonstrate if the learner will retain the knowledge of this lexical item from this short interaction in his future application, which will be discussed in the next section of this report.

Excerpt 14 (10/30/2007)

- 4 XL: Ni jin tian wan shang lian xi zhong wen ah: zai:: tu shu guan ma ((structural error))?
You today evening practice Chinese at the library ((structural error))?
- 5 JT: Ni shuo nar? Qing zai shuo yi bian.
You said where? Please say it one more time.
- 6 XL: Ni lian xi zhong wen zai tu shu guan ma ((again same structural error))?
You practice Chinese at the library ((again same structural error))?
- 7 JT: wo jue de wo men jin tian wan shang ke yi um: zai tu shu guan lian xi zhong wen. ((correct structure – adverbial of location needs to go before the verb)).
I think we can at the library practice Chinese ((correct structure)).
- 8 XL: Na HAO! Wo men jin tian wan shang lian xi... lian xi, um:: (+) ZAI tu shu guan lian xi ((changed into correct structure, putting the location before the verb lian xi)), ah, ni xiang ji dian?

Then GOOD! We today evening practice... um:: AT the library practice ((changed into correct structure, putting the location before the verb lian xi)), ah, you want what time?

Excerpt 14 above again shows that learners help each other frequently during peer interactive tasks through prompting and modeling. They help each other not only by directly pointing out partners' errors or using other means of help, but also by initiating assistance by prompting and modeling correct linguistic form. As we see in excerpt 14, XL in line 4 initiated a question with a structural error – the adverbial phrase of location should be used before the main verb in Chinese in this case. Instead of saying *Ni jin tian wan shang lian xi zhong wen zai tu shu guan ma?* (Are you tonight going to practice Chinese in the library?), the English sentence order, she should say *Ni jin tian wan shang zai tu shu guan lian xi zhong wen ma* (Literal translation: Are you tonight going in the library to practice Chinese?). JT in her turn, line 5, didn't answer the question directly, but with a clarification check first, she asked *Ni shuo nar?* (You said where?) and requested *Qing zai shuo yi bian* (please say it one more time). XL was obviously not aware of her error usage in the next turn, line 6, because she repeated the same error in the second time she answered JT's request. This time JT in her turn at line 7 responded the question with *Wo jue de wo men jin tian wan shang ke yi zai tu shu guan lian xi zhong wen* (I think we can practice Chinese in the library tonight) in correct structure.

It needs to be noted here that although it is a simple yes/no question format, JT didn't answer the question right away. She used a clarification check

question and requested the repetition of the original question by using the phrase *Qing zai shuo yi bian* (Please say it one more time), which is a common phrase students use frequently in the Chinese classroom. The phrase can function as either to clarify the question for a comprehension check or to initiate repair in which the initiation of repair would appear gentle to the peer who makes the error. In this case, JT used the strategy to get XL to repeat the question, and followed up with the correct sentence structure in her response, especially speaking the adverbial with emphasis to model the correct answer. Consequently, at least for the moment, XL noticed her error structure, and produced the correct form in her final response to JT in line 8, although with some hesitation indicated by her repetition and a brief pause before putting the adverbial phrase of location before the verb.

Excerpt 15 (12/04/2007)

- 9 XL: Ke shi tong chang ren de guan nian shi ni bu yao mai hen duo yi fu, suo yi ming pai de zhi liang hen hao.
But usually people's view is (that) you do not want to buy many clothes, so brand name's (clothes) quality is very good.
- 10 JT: Dan shi yi jian ming pai de bi liang jian fei ming pai de uh, uh, geng gui, ah (+) suo yi ni bu tai sheng qian um: cong chang how do you say 'long term' ((English))
But one brand name (clothing) compared to two non-brand name (clothing), uh, uh, more expensive, ah, therefore you are not saving money um from long ... how do you say ((English)) 'long term'
- 11 PL: chang:: yuan de: guan dian?
long-term view?
- 12 JT: oh, cong chang yuan de guan dian...
oh, from long-term view...

- 13 XL: Ke shi bu ming pai ((should be 'fei ming pai')) de yi fu zhi liang bu hao, suo yi ni dei mai hen duo de yi fu.
But non-brand name clothing quality not good, therefore you have to buy a lot of clothes.
- 14 JT: Na bu jian de zhe yang. Ah, you de fei ming pai de yi fu zhi liang bu hao, dan shi ah... ah... na...
That is not necessarily so. Ah, some non-brand name clothes' quality not good, but ah...ah...that... ((long pause))
- 15 PL: Ni ke yi...
You can...
- 16 JT: Ni ke yi mai hao, zhi liang hao de fei ming pai ((laughing))
You can buy good, good quality non-brand name ((laughing))
- 17 JM: zong de lai shuo, ming pai de yi fu bi bu ming pai de yi fu de um... you yi ge hao,
generally speaking, brand name clothes compared to non-brand name clothes um... (it) has a good, um...
- 18 XL: yang zi, yang zi
style, style
- 19 JM: style (hhh), bu shi, shi! (hhh)
Style ((English)) (laughing), no, yes! (laughing)

Excerpt 15 provides another example of prompting and co-construction. In peer interaction, when a learner encounters difficulty formulating an utterance or getting stuck on ideas, prompting and co-construction would occur. An interlocutor could chime in to provide a continuation of what the peer has said or provide missing words or even ideas to encourage the struggling peer to continue. The excerpt is taken out of a debate activity on brand-name clothing in which students were debating on the advantages and disadvantages of purchasing brand-name clothing. In line 14, JT seems to be stuck with the 'ah... ah... that...' and a long pause, a sign to struggle to continue, but with a simple prompt PL put forward in line 15 'ni ke yi...', JT was able to continue and finish up her utterance on the non-brand quality clothing argument in this activity. In line

18, XL, again provides a missing word which is crucial to aid JM to complete what he has intended to say in the debate.

On the basis of these data, learners do prompt and model each other during their interactive tasks in the target language, which in many cases results in L2 development in particular areas of learning. Excerpt 13 and 14 shown above provide examples in the areas of lexicon and syntax when learners prompt each other in their understanding of using words and sentences in their collaborative dialogue. Excerpt 15 also provides an example in peer assistance not only in providing needed words but also in directing peers to the needed ideas to complete their utterances for meaningful interaction.

Correcting Errors

The role of error correction has been argued to be facilitative of second language acquisition. From an interactionist perspective for acquisition to take place, there must be active involvement (Stevick, 1980), where conversation interactions contain opportunities for input and output, facilitating second language development to a various degree (Long, 1996). Varonis and Gass (1985) also contend that for learning to take place, learners must stumble upon “non-understandings” (p. 73). More specifically, the provisions of corrective feedback give the learner an opportunity to compare target-like utterances and nontarget-like utterances with their own interlanguage utterances (Tomasello & Herron, 1988). In addition, sociocultural perspective views that knowledge is social in nature and is constructed through a process of collaboration, interaction

and communication among learners in social settings (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). The data examined here show that the learners use the following types of repair initiation as a resource in peer learning context for modified input and output to communicate in the CFL classroom.

Self-initiated repair is one route by which repair is accomplished.

Seedhouse(2004) suggests four trajectories in this category: self-initiated self-repair, self-initiated other-repair, other-initiated self-repair, and other-initiated other-repair. In conversation, according to Schegloff et al. (1977), there is an order of preference with respect to repair trajectories with self-initiated repair being most preferred and most common.

The data show several instances of self-initiated repair. In self-initiated repair, through the process of producing an utterance in the L2, learners notice errors in their own utterances and take action to repair them. There are many examples of corrective feedback involving self-initiated repairs in the data set where the corrective feedback was not provided by peers or teacher, but where the learners notice their own linguistic errors, both initiating and completing repair on their own during peer dialogic interaction. The majority of the self-initiated repair episodes resulted in correct or improved forms as illustrated by excerpts 16, 17, and 18, but there were also self-initiated repair episodes that resulted in wrong forms as illustrated by excerpt 19 below.

In Excerpt 16, XL in her first turn, line 2, responded to TW's question in incorrect structure by saying *Wo shou shang le wo de jiao (I injured my foot)* first,

and this is an English sentence order, subject + verb + object, but in Chinese, sentences like this may be called 'notional passive' which is used infrequently compared to other regular passive sentences with a marker 'bei' (by). Therefore, it is a common error students tend to make in their talk, but here, XL, in the second part of her turn, she seemed to realize that the produced 'output' didn't appear to be appropriate, so in her hesitation, which is indicated by her pauses and 'ah', she was able to make the sentence correct in her second attempt to express herself with more hesitation and thinking. In the next turn, when TW asked *Shen me* (what) question, XL repeated the correct form with more fluency and confidence in her turn line 4, a successful repair without other-initiated repair efforts.

Excerpt 16 (11/092007)

- 1 TW: Ni you bing le ma?
You are sick?
- 2 XL: Wo shou shang le wo de jiao ((Error in syntax)), ah, (+) ah,
(+) wo shou shang.. ah (++) wo de jiao (+) shou: shang le
I injured my foot ((error: it should be wo de jiao shou shang le)), ah, (+) I injured... ah.. (++) my foot (+) injured
- 3 TW: shen me?
What?
- 4 XL: wo de jiao, ah, wo de jiao shou shang le (Correct form in
syntax).
My foot, ah, my foot got injured.
- 5 TW: na ge jiao?
Which foot?

Here self-repair of linguistic errors occurred only from the self-initiated effort, although TW's question could be a comprehension or clarification check or an

intentional prompt in this case. Some of these examples would require a follow-up interview of the participants if these particular peer interactions can be better understood. It is interesting to note that in teacher-fronted setting, self-initiated repairs are rare, and students would ask questions directly of the teacher, but in peer learning setting, it happens more often. One of the reasons could be that students have more freedom to experiment with the language to produce their own utterances, and in contrary, it is too restricted or there is very limited time for students to experience the process of initiating self-repairs with teacher-fronted class.

Excerpts 17 and 18 provide examples of L1 use in initiating self-repair, and also to illustrate how learners use L1 private speech to direct their own thinking to produce correct items in the L2. From a CA perspective, all repairs are likely to be signaled by various markers of incipient repair such as pauses, silences, cut-offs, and phrases such as “you know” and “I mean” etc. (Markee, 2000). However, repair is also an independent form of conversational organization in terms of how the turn sequence is established. Excerpt 17 shows the first position repair that was placed within the same turn as the trouble source as seen in PL’s turn, line 6, in which she both initiated and completed the repair in the same turn. Her signaling marker was her L1 use as seen in “something, strict?” and her hesitation pauses indicated by the extended long vowel sounds and the “ah” in her initiation of the short exchange with XL. It is interesting to note here PL’s L1 use in her turn also is an example of evident private speech use, in

which she used English, her L1, to direct her thinking process to get to the lexical item “strict” in her efforts to produce the L2, the Chinese lexical item correctly.

Private speech in this case takes a very simple and straightforward form since it is more addressed to oneself.

Excerpt 17 (10/02/2007)

- 6 PL: ah:: wo jue de (+) Ms. Jones ((English name)) shi:: hen, ah:: something, strict? Oh, hen yan ge de, yan ge de lao shi, shi bu shi?
Ah:: I think (+) Ms. Jones ((English name)) is:: very, ah:: something, strict ((English))? Oh, very strict, strict teacher, right?
- 7 XL: Yan ge? Dui, dui, ta shi hen yan ge
Strict? Yes, yes, she is ((error: 'is' should be omitted in Chinese)) very strict

Excerpt 18 is another example of self-initiated repair, in which XB used L1 (L2 in his case, but native speaker proficiency), English, to guide his thinking to get to the correct form he was looking for in the short exchange with JM. In line 8, as XB was explaining which year he came to America, he mistakenly offered *qu nian* (last year) first but abruptly followed this with an emphatic “no” and more English private speech utterance ‘no something nian, the year before the last’, and then the corrected form *qian nian*, all within the same turn as in excerpt 17.

Excerpt 18 (10/12/2007)

- 8 XB: ni shi qu:: nian, NO, qu nian last year, no something nian, the year before the last ((English)), oh, qian nian lai mei guo de.

You are la:: last year, no ((English)), last year last year ((2nd time in English)), no something ((English)) year, the year before the last ((English)), oh, the year before the last came to America.

- 9 JM: Dui, qian nian, bu shi qu nian.
Right, the year before the last, not last year.

Private speech plays an important role in self-initiated repairs in the L2 classroom, which is evident from the representative examples provided in the excerpts 17 and 18. For learners who are at the early stages of acquiring a second language such as beginning or low intermediate levels, the language used for the planning of action, or mediation of thought is likely the L1 rather than L2 (Ohta, 2001). Most learners in this study are still at intermediate level, and thus the L1 use in their cognitive processing is still constantly seen in peer-to-peer interaction.

As mentioned earlier, the data in this study for self-initiated repairs reveal overwhelmingly positive results in achieving correct form of language use in the Chinese classroom, mostly in lexicon and syntax correction. However, there are also examples of self-initiated repairs that ended up with the wrong use of the language form although they are considerably less of them. Excerpt 19 shows one of such examples in peer learning context.

Excerpt 19 (11/06/2007)

- 10 JM: Ni zai zhong guo de shi hou, um, ni gei::um, ni gei ta men xie xin ma?
When you were in China, you ga::ve um, you to them write ((literal translation – correct sentence order, but missing a

- tense particle 'le' after the verb to indicate the past tense))
letters?*
- 11 PL: wo bu xie xin. Wo fa ta men yi ge ming xin pian, wo, oh, wo
gei fa ta men yi ge ming xin pian.
*I don't write letter(s). I sent them a post card ((wrong order
with a missing preposition 'gei' before the pronoun and also
the tense marker 'le' after the verb 'fa', should be: wo gei ta
men fa le yi ge ming xin pian)). I, oh, I to send them a post
card.*
- 12 JM: da dian hua le ma?
Did you call?
- 13 PL: bu, tai gui le. Wo:: wo:: GEI fa ta men yi ge ming xin pian.
*No, too expensive. I:: I:: to ((preposition)) send them a post
card ((Again wrong sentence order. It should be: wo gei ta
men fa le yi ge ming xin pian)).*

When PL responded to JM's question in her turn at line 11, she said the wrong sentence order *Wo fa ta men yi ge ming xin pian* wrong, but right away she seemed to recognize the fact that it was incorrect. So, in the second part of her turn, PL tried to repair the sentence, by adding the preposition *gei* (to) but still did it in the wrong order. In this particular adjacency pair exchange between JM and PL, when PL made the error in her production, JM didn't seem to notice the error or didn't intend to correct but kept his questioning going in the second turn in line 12. When PL responded to JM's question, she again made a mistake in the sentence order even after adding the preposition to the sentence. This example shows PL's recognition of her own error and her initiation of self-repair, but the ending production still resulted in an error production. Data like this show that whether or not learners are able to successfully accomplish self-initiated repairs depends on their ability to remember their own utterances for comparison with the utterances of others, either teachers or peers. If they do, they are able to

notice, compare, and contrast when they interact with others in the target language.

Other-initiated repair is another way of correcting errors during peer interactions in the CFL classroom. Van Lier (1988a) points out that repair is a generic term, with correction or error replacement being one kind of repair, and identifies three different goal orientations for repair in L2 classrooms and four basic kinds of repair. He suggests that we should bear in mind that certain types of learning tasks or activities naturally lead to certain types of repair. Therefore, the issue of how to repair is closely related to the context of what is being done in the L2 classroom. It is interesting to note that the data from this study agree with Van Lier's conclusion from his study in that certain types of repair do not, or rarely happen in peer interactive context in the CFL classroom, for example, pronunciation and tone repairs, but occur constantly in teacher-fronted contexts in the CFL classroom, which is not discussed in this analysis. However, the peer interaction data reveal other-initiated repairs in several other areas. One of most frequently occurred repairs was recast. Ohta (2001) defines a recast as an utterance that reformulates a learner's erroneous utterance. Recasts may contrast with learner utterances phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, or semantically, but are based on the learner's erroneous utterance and maintain semantic contiguity with it. Recasts are immediately subsequent to the utterance. Excerpt 20 below is a typical example of recasts, which comes from a large transcript of open conversation discussion.

Excerpt 20 (10/30/2007)

- 14 PL: wo bu zhi dao... oh, wo.. wo.. wo xi huan hai zi. Wo xiang zuo hai zi de gong zuo.
I don't know... oh, I ... I ... I like children. I want to do work (with) children.
- 15 JT: he hai zi you guan de gong zuo?
Work that is related to children?
- 16 PL: he ... dui, dui, he hai zi ... you guan?
to... yes, yes, (work) related to children?..
- 17 JT: you guan de gong zuo.
the work related to...
- 18 PL: you guan de gong zuo. Dui, wo xi huan hai zi, suo yi wo xiang he hai zi...ummm (+) um (+) zuo you guan de gong zuo.
The work related to... Correct, I like children, so I want to with child, er...er...er ... do work related to children.

In the second part of PL's first turn, she said *Wo xiang zuo hai zi de gong zuo* (I want to do work (with) children – literally: children's work), which is a confusing expression in terms of meaning. JT in her turn appeared to be a confirmation check question by using the same expression in correct form *he hai zi you guan de gong zuo?* but was actually a recast. Although JT didn't correct PL directly, PL noticed the problematic area of her own expression through hearing JT's confirmation question, which directed PL to guide herself through repeating the correct form first in line 18, which is evidently private speech resulted from hearing the recast. So, PL in turn was able to produce the correct utterance in the second part of her response to JT's question. This portion of the interaction occurred in the Open Conversations activity which is a meaning-and-fluency context for L2 practice. Although the purpose is to communicate with more fluency, other-initiated repairs still happen, but more indirectly in a recast form

that doesn't interrupt the communication. We all know that teachers make constant use of recasts in the L2 classrooms and the positive impact of recasts on language development has been shown in several studies. This example shows that learners attend to corrective feedback in recasts during peer-to-peer interaction as well. When peers talk, learners engaging in the conversation do notice and attend to their own errors through interacting with others in collaborative dialogues such as this one. Learners' repair of their errors immediately after recast feedback has been considered as an indication that recasts are an effective form of feedback.

Throughout the study, little attention was paid to correct or incorrect pronunciation in basic learner production during peer interaction work, i.e., no tonal marks, either correct or incorrect, were incorporated into the transcripts. The main reason was that it is very common for students with low to upper intermediate levels to make pronunciation errors, especially with the complicated tone system of the language. However, there are instances where mispronunciation resulted in other-initiated repair when it affected communication. Excerpt 21 provides an example of pronunciation causes confusion if not repaired.

Excerpt 21 (11/13/2007)

- 19 MD: zuo tian wan shang? Yeah, wo (++) eh: er ge zhong tou
*yesterday evening? Yeah ((English)), I (++) eh: two ((wrong
usage of 'two' here)) hours*
- 20 JT: liang ge zhong tou
two hours ((correct usage of 'two' in this case))

- 21 MD: eh:: zai tu shu guan xiu xi
eh:: at (the) library rest
- 22 JT: xue xi?
Study?
- 23 MD: ah xue xi, dui, xue xi le liang ge zhong tou (hhh)
ah study, right, studied two hours (hhh)
- 24 JT: ((smile))

JT offered two instances of repair in Excerpt 21, in line 20 and 22, both in response to MD's ill-formed lexical items. The first one, *liang ge zhong tou* (two hours), she offered following MD's mistaken *er ge zhong tou* ('two' used incorrectly in this case), which MD appeared to only briefly notice with *eh* at the beginning of line 21. Moving on, MD produced *zai tu shu guan xiu xi* (at the library rest), a mistake of context it appeared, seeing a) how the topic of MD's talk was on library to study (*xue xi*), not to rest (*xiu xi*) and b) how the two lexical items *xue xi* and *xiu xi* have similar pronunciation and consonant sounds. For both repairs JT offered in the short exchanges, MD oriented, producing grammatically correct uptake in his last turn, line 23. It is obvious to Chinese speakers in this case that MD intended to say 'study' instead of 'rest' because of the similar sounds of the two lexical items in this context because he would not spend two hours resting in the library in the boarding school context. JT recognized that error right away and offered the repair in the form of clarification check question form which allowed communication to continue nicely.

Instances of this type do not happen as frequently as some other types of repairs in the other-initiated repair category, but this above example is representative of a few instances of this type from our data collection. Recasts

provide a scaffold for L2 learners who utilize it in interaction with others. This process of assisted performance builds into the L2 learners' linguistic development, as recasts are developmentally tailored to the child's growing abilities (Ohta, 2001). Learners make good use of recasts provided by their peer interlocutors during pair and group work. Excerpt 22 below shows another example of how the learners correct the errors during the uptake process.

Excerpt 22 (11/02/2007)

- 25 TW: tang mu he lin da qu zhong guo de shi hou bu dong zhong guo ren wei shen me wen ta men de nian ling, wei shen me?
When Tom and Linda went to China, Chinese ask(ed) their age, why?
- 26 JM: ah, um, suo yi, mei guo ren bu chang chang wen nian ling
ah, um, therefore, American do not often ask (about) age
- 27 XB: YIN WEI, yin wei, mei guo ren bu chang chang wen nian ling
BECAUSE, because, American do not often ask (about) age
- 28 JM: dui, yin wei ta men bu wen, suo yi hen qi guai.
Right, because they do not ask (age), therefore very strange.
- 29 TW: zhong guo ren wen, ah:: ni duo da, ni ni shi ji sui (++) ah: ta men wei shen me?
Chinese ask, ah:: how old are you, what many years of age are you (++) ah: they why?
- 30 XB: ta men shi shen me yi si?
They mean what?((Correct form, meaning: what do they mean?))
- 31 TW: dui, ta men shi shen me yi si?
Right, what do they mean?
- 32 JM: ta men zhi dao ni de nian ling, um, um, cheng hu?
They know your age, um, um, to address?
- 33 XB: wei le cheng hu!
in order to address!
- 34 JM: wei le hao, geng hao, geng hao de cheng hu ni
in order to more, better, better address you
- 35 TW: cheng hu? ((English))
To address? ((English))
- 36 JM: to address
to address ((providing English translation))

→ 37 TW: oh, na zen me cheng hu?
Oh, then how to address?

Excerpt 22 is a segment from a triad group discussion. The participants, TW, JM, and XB were discussing an interview they had just listened and it was about two American students who just came back from a short study program in China. TW, in line 25, initiated a 'why' question, but JM in his response to the question in line 26 made a mistake of using the opposite 'suo yi' (therefore) instead of 'yin wei' (because) to ask the question logically. The error was repaired immediately by his peer XB in the next turn, when XB pointed out the mistake with emphasis on the word 'yin wei' (because) and followed with a corrected version of the sentence *yin wei mei guo ren bu chang chang wen nian ling* (because Americans do not often ask about age) in the same turn. In the next turn, JM in line 28 seemed to understand what the problem was and corrected himself in his uptake of XB's previous statement by saying *dui, yin wei ta men bu wen, suo yi hen qi guai* (right, because they do not ask, therefore very strange).

Two more repair sequences are worth looking at in this collaborative dialogue among three participants. In line 29, TW continued with his questioning on the cultural aspect of age inquiry, ending with a question *ta men wei shen me* (they why?), which is not very clear to the audience. In the next turn, without interrupting the communication, XB initiated a repair in line 30 in the form of clarification check by saying *ta men shi shen me yi si?* (What do they mean?), which resulted in TW's production of the corrected reformulated question in line

31. TW, in listening to his peer, instantiated, and thereby, appropriated as his own, both the locus of potential trouble and repair initiation in his own talk. The accomplishment of this repair, although seems to be small, allowed the meaning of communication to flow without misunderstanding and thus to achieve the goal of the conversation. Another interesting repair sequence occurs at lines 32-37. When JM in his response to the previous question formed the first part of his statement, but put out the word 'cheng hu' (to address) with a rising tone, indicating that he wasn't sure about the word, which could actually be the concluding part of his statement in line 32. XB in the next turn said *wei le cheng hu* (in order to address), which put the lexical item 'cheng hu' into a more specific context and consequently assisted his peer JM's production in completing his statement in his previous attempt. JM with his peer's help completed the repair successfully in his turn at line 34 to produce accurately what he intended to express, which shows the successful negotiation for meaning in the end.

The above excerpts again show that in the peer-learning context, learners do experience corrective feedback in a variety of forms and the uptake frequency for recasts is comparatively higher than in the teacher-fronted classroom setting.

The qualitative findings from this study in corrective feedback reveal that there were a wide range of corrective feedback forms in the CFL classroom, and learners took opportunities to initiate self-corrections, prompt and model others, ask for assistance, as well as provide recasts in many language related episodes in peer-to-peer interactions. The results provide evidence that corrective

feedback is a resource for effective language learning because in the process of the corrective feedback episodes all seven learners involved in this study experienced at least several episodes of corrective feedback in the areas illustrated in the selected examples of the excerpts in this section, either providing recasts or other types of assistance or eliciting for help in their repair efforts to produce correct target language. These findings are consistent with previous research on corrective feedback in the L2 classroom (Ohta, 2001, Swain, 1995). Corrective feedback is a complicated issue to cover in the scope of this document, so it is the researcher's attempt to show from the representative examples in the peer interaction data that corrective feedback is a powerful resource for L2 learning and development.

Positive L1 Use

As discussed in the earlier sections of this document, it is within the ZPD that cognitive development occurs, not only during early stage of one's life but the process continues throughout one's life. We become self-regulated through collaboration with others in our culture. One of the major areas of inquiry in sociocultural theory is concerned with the question of how language serves to mediate human activity both on the interpsychological plane, in the form of social speech, and on the intrapsychological plane, in the form of private speech. Vygotskian traditions acknowledge the value of L1 use as a tool for learners to self-regulate their own performance (Brooks, Donato, & McGlone, 1997; van Lier, 1992; Vygotsky, 1986). This view of L1 as a thinking tool is worth considering

because L1 use may enrich the usability of the L2 that is available for active learner participation (van Lier, 2000). Several researchers have studied the use of L1 from a sociocultural perspective to second language learning. Some are in the area of students' collaborative interactions, and others have analyzed discourse that occurred in their subjects' native languages (e.g., Brooks & Donato, 1994; De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; Donato & Lantolf, 1990; Swain, 1995). However, by contrast, the input-interaction tradition views L2 learning as a matter of encoding and decoding linguistic knowledge, and do not seem to have much to say about L1 use (see van Lier, 2000). In this view, learners are assumed to have adequate levels of L2 proficiency to perform communicative tasks, but in fact, many L2 learners, especially those in CFL settings in the United States where there is a lack of target language environment, may not be quite ready for the challenge of the second language only (in this case, Chinese) yet. So, the question needs to be addressed is: Does L1 use in the CFL classroom mediate L2 learning or not?

In analyzing the data collected for this study, L1 use by the seven participants in their interactive routines is another fairly obvious feature of peer interaction, which plays an important cognitive role both in scaffolding and in externalizing their inner speech as is necessary to complete the task, achieve their goals, and therefore realize their levels of potential development in the target language. The data that contain negative cases were mostly eliminated during the off-task actions when the learners were not engaged in the tasks. The

following excerpts illustrate the important role that L1, in this case, English, plays in the collaborative process of peer learning context. It needs to be noted here that the seven learners were all from different cultural backgrounds, so English may not be their L1. However, all seven learners were admitted into the school as competent English speakers, and no ESL classes were offered in the school's curriculum. In Excerpt 23, students in pairs are composing a description of classmates on personalities, hobbies, and other features of the person's overall quality. They then read the finished description aloud to the class, and the class guesses whom they're describing according to the facts given in their description.

Excerpt 23 (10/19/2007)

- 1 XL: I can't remember the word for intraverted...
I can't remember the word for intraverted...
- 2 JM: Um...
Um...
- 3 XL: Oh, wo men ke yi shuo an jing he hai xiu?
Oh, we can say 'shy and quiet'?
- 4 JM: Um... ke yi, intraverted, intraverted, I can't remember it either...
Um... (we) can, intraverted, intraverted (saying it to himself), I can't remember it either...
- 5 XL: ta hen an jing he ((starting to write down))
he (is) very quiet and ((starting to write down))
- 6 JM: hai xiu, we just learned the word, wo zhi dao extraverted, wai xiang, intraverted, li, li, li xiang? No? wait, I am checking it out ((looking it up in the dictionary))
shy, we just learned the word, I know extraverted, 'wai xiang', intraverted, inside, inside, intraverted?((wrong combination)) No? ((He was helping out while looking up the word intraverted in the dictionary))
- 7 XL: um, no... ta hen an jing he hai xiu ((saying it while writing it down))
he very quiet and shy ((saying it while writing it down))

- 8 JM: nei xiang, nei xiang, intraverted is nei xiang! ((pointing the dictionary))
Intraverted, intraverted, intraverted is 'nei xiang'!
- 9 XL: Oh, hen hao. Wo men ke yi shuo ta fei chang nei xiang, um, um, ye hen an jing and hai xiu.
Oh, very good. We can say he is very intraverted, um, um, also very quiet and shy.
- 10 JM: hao.
Good.

In line 1, XL started to address the problem of accessing the linguistic item needed to express their idea in composing the description. The problem is stated in the assertion in line 1 'I can't remember the word for introverted', which serves the function of seeking a translation. JM in his turn at line 2 expressed his inability to help with the hesitation indicating by 'um' followed by a long pause. The 'oh' in line 3 is the externalization of XL's internally generated discovery of a solution to the problem, which is revealed in the subsequent discourse to be the construction of the description of a classmate. She initiated the strategy by using two other adjectives 'quiet' and 'shy', which marked her proposal for solving the problem. In line 4, JM in his turn, agreed with the proposal, but his mind seemed to be still working on the word 'introverted', which is indicated by his private speech 'introverted, introverted' and followed up by his next turn at line 6, as he was still working through the word 'introverted'. JM in this turn indicated that he knew the word 'extraverted' as 'wai xiang', and in analyzing the word formation he offered 'li xiang' with an abrupt 'no' to dismiss the answer. However, JM's strategy shows that he was using private speech to process his prior knowledge on word formation to get to the solution. In Chinese, 'wai' in 'wai xiang'

(extraverted) means 'outside', and 'li' means 'inside' because there is another word 'nei' to mean 'inside' which forms the word 'nei xiang' (intraverted).

Although it is not the right character for this combination word 'intraverted' and the final solution was the dictionary for the two learners, JM's strategic use of analyzing the word formation and his L1 use through private speech mediated his cognitive process during his interaction with his peer XL to complete composing the text. His efforts in finding the right word with XL collaboratively completed the sentence *ta fei chang nei xiang, ye hen an jing he hai xiu* (he is very intraverted, also very quiet and shy) in line 9. These utterances both in L1 and L2 in this short exchange triggered an interesting lexical search, which is a communicative and cognitive strategy that lead the learners to jointly access the L2 knowledge that are available to them and sufficient for the task they are engaged in.

It is interesting to see here when writing a text represents less of a cognitive challenge, the learners would compose directly in L2 as shown in lines 3 and 5. This example shows that the use of L1 can be used as a mediating device in the construction of collective scaffolding. By using both the L1 and L2, the two learners provide mutual help to each other that lead to the solution of the problem.

Excerpt 24 is a representative example of using L1 in *code switching* to continue with the communication when there is a gap in their lexical knowledge of the target language. In the collaborative activity of L2 learners, L1 serves not only cognitive functions as illustrated in the above example, but also serves social

functions. Using L1 in code switching seems to be necessary for L2 learners when there is a gap in their L2 knowledge for the purpose of communication without interrupting the flow of the conversation as illustrated in Excerpt 24. TW in his turn at line 11 knew the word *yin yue* (music), but not the complete word *yin yue hui* (concert), so he used the English word to fill in the gap. MD seemed to only pay attention to the content of TW's sentence, and responded with a question *shi jin tian wan shang* (is it tonight?). In the next turn, line 13, TW didn't know the two lexical items 'clarinet' and 'jazz' in Chinese, so again he just used English words to fill in the 'gap' in his production of the Chinese sentence. His interlocutor MD didn't know the two words either, so he didn't offer assistance in translating the English words, instead, he continued the conversation on the same topic to complete the conversational exchange using the same strategy of switching code for those two lexical items.

Excerpt 24 (11/06/2007)

- 11 TW: wo qu le kan na ge yin yue ... concert ((English))
I went to watch the music... concert ((English))
- 12 MD: shi jin tian wan shang?
Is (it) tonight?
- 13 TW: shi zuo tian. Ta men de yin yue... concert ((English)) hen bang, ke shi wo jue de the clarinet he jazz ((English)) biao yan bu tai hao
was last night. Their music... concert ((English)) excellent, but I think the clarinet and jazz ((English)) performance not very good
- 14 MD: wo bu xi huan clarinet he jazz ((English)), ke shi:: ke shi: wo de peng you biao yan.
I don't like clarinet and jazz ((English)), but ... but.. my friend perform.

- 15 TW: ni ying gai qu, yin wei bie de dou hen bang, ni peng you de xiao ti qin hen hao.
You should go, because others (are) all excellent, your friend's violin very good.

This excerpt shows that L1 use depends on the context of the conversation in the L2 classroom. The above conversation occurred during the open conversations activity, which served the purpose of communication in the target language about the participants' daily life. When this short exchange occurred, the student concert was on for the weekend, so they were talking about what was going on on campus which was a socially meaningful communication for them. Code switching in this case was used for supporting and sustaining the interaction to get meaning across.

The use of L1 in the CFL classroom seems to depend on the dynamic and the purpose of the class. It is also often used in *task management*. In role-play exercises, L1 is constantly used to clarify information and it is used as a mediating device in the construction of collective scaffolding. One can question, though, whether the nature of the role-plays (e.g., a waiter/customer, or a doctor/patient interaction) exaggerate the performance aspects of the interactions. Using L1 for managing role-plays may be a product of the tasks themselves which require learners to produce a coherent role-play in L2. When a learner is expected to be a waiter or a doctor in Chinese, any use of Chinese for task management is subject to misinterpretation by the partner as a 'waiter' or a 'doctor' contribution. Therefore, from learners' perspectives, L1 is dually

economical; not only is it faster, it also preempts possible confusion as to the 'roles' the participants are playing, thus the division between the role and the self is economically compatible with the division between L2 and L1. Ohta (2001) in discussing the criteria for the success of peer interactive tasks mentions "a high rate of L2 participation with limited L1 use for task management, to provide a needed vehicle for thought (in private speech or to work out linguistic problems), or for occasional vocabulary substitution" (p. 250). In the data collected for this study, learners were highly engaged in role-play tasks in which they have the freedom to create and manipulate the 'story' of the scenario given in the process of using both L1 and L2. L1 use seems to be beneficial for students to establish mutual agreement on the roles, events, goals or sub-goals that define their role-play tasks. Excerpt 25 illustrates how students in both L1 and L2 negotiated to complete the role-play exercise effectively.

The excerpt came from a role-play exercise on the topic of love counseling during a lesson on dating and marriage. The activity was used to provide students with an opportunity to extend the topic by playing 'love doctor' and 'patients'. The students were encouraged to use Chinese as much as possible in doing the role-plays. XL, MD, and JT got together as a group, and the following example is an excerpt from the beginning of their role-play interaction.

Excerpt 25 (10/26/2007)

→ 16 XL: OK, does anyone want to be the marriage counselor? Do we want to pretend to be a couple or two separate patients?

- Ok, does anyone want to be the marriage counselor? Do we want to pretend to be a couple or two separate patients?*
- 17 MD: mei guan xi. Wo jue de JT ying gai dang yi sheng
 ((laughing))
It doesn't matter. I think JT should be the doctor ((laughing))
- 18 JT: ah:: well, OK.
Ah:: well, OK.
- 19 XL: Wo men ((looking at MD)) ke yi shi husband and wife, oh, xian sheng he tai tai, how does that sound? (hhh)
We ((looking at MD)) can be husband and wife, oh, mr. and mrs., how does that sound? ((laughing))
- 20 MD: wo mei wen ti. Na wo men zen me kai shi?
I (have) no problem. Then how do we start?
- 21 JT: kai shi hen rong yi. You guys can knock at the door, and start coming in, but do you want to talk about what major problems and stuff, so I can prepare a little bit how to treat you ((laughing)).
Starting is easy. You guys can knock at the door, and start coming in, but do you want to talk about what major problems and stuff, so I can prepare a little how to treat you ((laughing)).
- 22 MD: Mmmm... sure, let's ...
Mmmm... sure, let's ...
- 23 XL: how about we talk about conflicts before marriage and after marriage?
how about we talk about conflicts before marriage and after marriage?
- 24 MD: You mean things are different after marriage?
You mean things are different after marriage?
- 25 XL: Yea, I could say something like you used to help out with household Chores (hhh), and treated me nicely, but after marriage you are lazy, not taking much... um...responsibility after work and stuff...
Yea, I could say something like you used to help out with household chores ((laughing)), and treated me nicely, but after marriage you are lazy, not taking much, um, responsibility after work and stuff...
- 26 MD: hao, wo shi xian sheng, wo shuo... um ... wo jue de wife should take care of the family matter, so she is expected to do the job ((English)), (to XL) you can say your opinion.
Good, I am the Mr., I say ... um ... I feel wife should take care of the family matter, so she is expected to do the job, (to XL) you can say your opinion.

→ 27 JT: OK, think of a couple of more problems, and I'll try to give advice (hhh) ah:: xiang ni men ying gai tan hua, hao hao tan hua, he peng you liao tian tao lun shen me de
((In English)) OK, think of a couple of more problems, and I'll try to give advice ((laughing)), ah:: like you (guys) should talk, talk well, chat and discuss with friends, etc.

In this excerpt, L1 is used to negotiate how the task should be managed among the participants for the role-play: negotiating for casting the 'roles' as shown in lines 17 and 18, engaging each other to attend to the content of the topic, and discuss the sequences of starting and completing the task. Although the teacher's ideal may be that learners use only the L2 to accomplish their role-plays or any other collaborative tasks with peer, studies show that 'students do use the L1 to some extent' (Ohta, 2001, p. 236). For this study, it is obvious that limited time requirement to do a role-play activity affected students' choice of using L1 to discuss their task management and implementation. Due to the time limitation in classroom role-play activities, this excerpt is representative example of participants' orientation to manage the task at the beginning of role-play exercises before they completely get into their L2 use to play their 'roles'. The topic of love and marriage is a more complex topic to discuss. With the limited vocabulary and language structures the students learned from the unit at an intermediate level, L1 use may also be related to the challenging degree of the content, even if they were familiar with the role-play format in their classroom experience. So, here in this Excerpt, English was used to for task management in

which learners used their L1 as a thinking tool to mediate their activity when their L2 knowledge was not sufficient to show productivity for the purpose.

Language functioning on the intrapsychological plane is often externalized as private speech, which, because it has its genesis in social speech, is dialogic in nature (Vygotsky, 1979). Learners engage in *private speech* in different forms, and one of them from the classroom corpus of this study is their L1 use as private speech as a tool to direct their own thinking in cognitively challenging tasks in the CFL classroom. Excerpt 26 provides an example of how a learner used L1 private speech to direct his thinking in a guessing dialogue on a series of pictures of characters they had created.

Excerpt 26 (10/23/2007)

- 28 TW: um... ta you hen gao de:: um... like ((English)), hen gao de um... ge zi. Ta you .. um... and, like, like ((English)), hei se de tou fa, like, um, like ((English)), hen chang hei se de tou fa.
um... he/she (the same pronunciation for the two pronouns) has very tall... um... like ((English)), very tall..um... hight. He/she has...um... and, like, like ((English)), black hair, like, um.. like ((English)), very long black hair.
- 29 JT: Li li?
Lily?
- 30 TW: bu dui. Ta (+) shi, um... like... fei chang you tiao, um, NO, that's food, um shi:: miao tiao. Oh, and (++) ta xi huan yin yue. Ta ... um, shi like ... um... TAN-ing ji ta ((hhh. Note: the verb TAN means 'to play' in Chinese, but there is no -ing form in any Chinese verbs – verb conjugation doesn't exist in Chinese grammar))
Not correct. He/she (+) is, um... like ... very fried dough stick, um, NO, that's food, um is, slender. Oh, and (++) ((English)) he/she like music. He/she ... um, is like ((English)) ...um... play-ing guitar!
- 31 JT: Ta zheng zai tan ji ta.

He/she is playing guitar.

In this short exchange between TW and JT, TW used several times the English words such as 'like' and 'and' in his utterances to help him think, which indicated his effort of appropriating new meanings into the L2 discourse, typical for beginning and intermediate L2 learners. TW in these utterances struggle to maintain his self-regulation by using private speech in English to direct and redirect his thinking to complete his sentences in Chinese. He had learned these words and the progressive tense in his lessons before, but it was still challenging for him to maintain all the vocabulary words and tenses in the new language if he didn't have to use them frequently. However, these communicative exercises in L2 allow them to use the new language, at least to some extent, as a means of maintaining and gaining self-regulation in the interaction.

With regard to private speech and L2 mediation, Ushakova (1994) from her study with adult L1 speakers of Russian learning words in an artificial language came to the following conclusion:

the second language is incorporated into the classification system already available in the first language, relies on the previously developed semantic system, and actively employs first language phonology. This all means that the main driving force is not so much inner self development as it is use of first language development. To put it figuratively, second language is looking into the windows cut out by the first language. (p. 154).

This statement also speaks to the above example in which TW in line 30 used a combination of Chinese verb 'tan' and the English -ing form to form a sentence in his attempt to describe what he was trying to say. Although his laughter indicated

that he knew it was a mistake, he was using his first language knowledge of tense to express what he wanted to say at the moment. In the next line (line 31), JT provided the correct form of the tense which is a combination of the word 'zheng zai' and the verb 'tan'. TW could have forgotten how to say the word 'zheng zai' in this case, but his efforts of using L1 knowledge as a resource to convey meaning showed an example of Ushakova's argument in L2 development, relying on previously developed grammatical system. The linguistic awareness of the L1 transfer to L2 sometimes helps learners to deal with the hazards of using two languages alternately. Developmentally, one's private speech comes from social interaction. According to Vygotsky, cognitive development proceeds from the social to the individual. As such, in verbal communication such as peer interactive dialogues, participants bring in their own background knowledge from their past sociocultural as well as language experience. One's use of private speech in a given interaction, task, or activity ultimately relates to his or her sociocultural and sociohistorical experience.

Negative Off-task Action during Peer Work

Table 4.4 Types of Negative Off-task Actions through Peer Work

Negative Off-task	JT	TW	JM	MD	XB	XL	PL	Total
Disengaged	0	4	16	0	17	6	2	45 (32%)
Expressing impatience	0	0	7	2	6	6	0	21 (15%)
Giving up on tasks	0	0	5	2	5	6	0	18 (12%)
Capable peer burden	4	0	5	0	0	0	0	9 (6%)
L1 Use – Negative	3	6	6	5	12	11	4	47(33%)
Total	7	10	39	9	40	29	6	140

Note: Percentages were rounded to the closest percentage.

There were also negative off-task actions during peer interactive work as summarized in Table 4.4. These actions generally fall into the categories of disengagement, impatience with the task or peers, giving up on tasks, irrelevant L1 use during peer language work, and more capable peer burdened with too much responsibility. Off-task actions varied in length from a few seconds to a few minutes. The number of off-task actions differed greatly among the seven participants. With the five categories of off-task actions, the total was 140 in which XB and JM exhibited the highest number of off-task actions, many of which were related to disengagement and irrelevant L1 use during tasks. By far the largest number of off-task actions, 47 instances, were identified as relating to negative L1 use during peer interactive tasks in which participants used their L1, English to discuss irrelevant topics that diverted their attention away from the tasks. JT and PL exhibited the lowest number of off-task actions, 4 of which were

related to capable peer burden for JT and a combined 7 of which between JT and PL were related to negative L1 use.

In order to gain insight into how second language learning was mediated in peer interaction, only on-task actions summarized in Table 4.3 were further analyzed in this section.

Conclusion of Research Question 1

In the foregoing discussion of the results of the analysis of the data with regard to Research Question 1, which sought to uncover the types of peer interactions that mediated L2 learning, the researcher analyzed the interactional routines of the CFL classroom including mainly the open conversations, the role-plays, and the pair/triad work among peers. The collaborative dialogues within these learning activities allowed the researcher to trace the interaction among the seven participants in their efforts to learn Chinese during these routine actions. The analysis of these interactional routines reveals several themes associating with the concepts of L2 learning and development in the sociocultural framework. More specifically, they fall into the categories of initiating conversations, asking or providing assistance, prompting and modeling, correcting errors, and positive L1 use that mediate L2 learning. Within these categories, open conversations as a bounded speech event allowed participants to explore their opportunities in social interaction in the target language as they helped each other to talk about their daily life in this nonstructured communicative event. During such events, the participants were observed to create a context of shared understanding in which

the negotiation of language form and meaning co-occurred. In role-play and pair/triad context, the participants were able to collaborate in both their L1 and L2 to complete their tasks and in the process of talk-in-action students were able to build their L2 knowledge constructively. The different manner of assistance among the participants during peer interactions were further analyzed through the types of corrective feedback participants used as a resource for their L2 development. The general patterns of assisting each other in their collaborative dialogues were in the categories of providing and asking for assistance, prompting and modeling each other, self-initiated repair, and other-initiated repair sequences. These patterns of assistance were observed to have a very effective facilitating effect on the learners, so they provided a great resource for learners' L2 development. The last issue this study addressed to answer research question 1 was the participants' L1 use. Evidence of positive effects of using L1 in peer interactive work was revealed in many cases such as illustrated in the category of L1 use to scaffold, code-switch to sustain conversation, use L1 in task management, and L1 use as private speech. However, data also revealed that too much of L1 use sometimes reduced opportunities for students to engage more in L2 talk. Therefore, teachers may have to base on students' levels and set a limit to students' L1 use in assigning communicative tasks in the classroom.

In summary, the excerpts shown here in this section are representative examples from the data that show the facilitative effect of peer performance during their interactive tasks. These results expand what has shown in previous

research. Learners in their interaction with one another collaboratively build utterances that are challenging for them or their interlocutors. Through the process of scaffolding the performance of one another, learners help themselves, building bridges to proficiency as they support the production of their peers. The types of peer interactions illustrated here clearly mediate learners' L2 development. It is meaningful to use Ohta's highlights on the importance of describing the broader context of oral interaction to conclude the section:

Because learner's oral participation is embedded in context, and produced in collaboration with other persons and with artifacts of the classroom setting, learner utterances are intimately dependent on these factors. Other persons include classmates and the classroom teacher with whom the learner interacts during learning activities, as well as those seated around the learner in the classroom, whose utterances and interactions the learner can overhear and appropriate. Language is not a unique product of just the learner's individual brain, but of a mind that actively draws on the interactive environment of the setting in which language is used. (Ohta, 2001, p.4)

This again speaks to the essence of sociocultural theory that views humans as culturally and historically situated – not as isolated individuals. In peer learning context, second language learners make use of themselves, their peers, artifacts, and other resources to mediate learning and to transform themselves (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2001). The next section explores the results of the data analysis that corresponded the second research question. This question concerns how second language development is manifested in peer interactive work over the course of the semester.

Research Question 2: Peer Interactions and L2 Development

Results: Learners, Perspectives, Participation, and SLA

The results of research question 1 revealed clear evidence of second language learning mediated by peer interactions. The instances discussed above show a high level of collaboration and mutuality, when participants contributed to language learning activities constructively with each other through initiating conversations, assisting one another's performance with error corrections, prompts, and other means of support. This section constitutes an effort to probe further into each learner's second language development in peer interaction holistically by examining multiple data sources. The main resources of data used to address the second research question were the personal history interviews, language reflection journals, peer interaction data from the 20-hour video/audio recordings, oral course assessments, as well as the oral proficiency interviews (OPIs) conducted with the participants both at the beginning and at the end of the study.

More specifically, in order to fulfill the second purpose of the study – to explore how second language development is manifested in peer interactions, first, seven narratives that resulted from the qualitative analysis of several data sources will be presented. Second, evidence from a comparative analysis of the two oral proficiency interviews will be presented to show change in learners' L2 development over time. In the data being analyzed, seven different participants – one Honduran, two Koreans, and four Americans, all with different sociocultural

histories and language learning experiences – were all studying Chinese at a New England boarding school. Through analyzing individually and comparisons of the cases, the focus will be on the learners as agents in their transformations as they participate in learning Chinese as a foreign language through peer interactions in the classroom setting.

The Learners

This section reviews the personal history of each learner and includes the data from the language reflection journals and the data from the video/audio tapes of peer interaction. Each learner will be discussed individually.

Narrative 1: JT

Personal History Interview Recap

As introduced earlier, JT was an international student with a Korean cultural background. She started learning English in second grade at an international school in Seoul, and came to the US to attend the boarding school as a 9th grader. Prior to her attendance to the US school, she studied Chinese with a private tutor for three months, and by the beginning of the study, she had studied Chinese at the same school for three years. JT was the star student in class who was very motivated and responsible for her work. Although she was often quiet, she seemed to know all the answers in class and always willing to assist others in language learning tasks. Her proficiency level was obviously

higher than the rest of her peers in the class. In her account of the language learning experience, the four tones of Chinese presented the most challenges, but vocabulary, grammar, and other parts of the language learning experience were all comparatively easier to her because of her Korean background, which has many similar traits to Chinese language and culture. In addition to the challenge in learning to pronounce all four tones accurately, she acknowledged that it was difficult to be the more advanced student than everyone else in class because of the burden to bear extra responsibilities in peer learning tasks sometimes. However, she always tried her best because she believed that learning Chinese well would help her in college and with her future career. She felt comfortable with her knowledge of Chinese culture because Chinese culture and her home culture bear a lot of similarities in tradition. Her family was very supportive of her learning Chinese and both of her younger sisters were also taking Chinese at their current schools in the US. JT's personal language learning history discussed here shed light on her views and goals of learning Chinese as a foreign language.

JT's Changing View on Peer Interaction - Self Reflection

The language reflection journals give insight into learners' views on their language learning experiences. Each learner's view on peer interaction and overall language learning seem to reflect a basic orientation for each learner, which formed as a result of each learner's learning history described here. JT is an example of an individual who set a clear goal for learning Chinese well. Her

data suggest the ways in which she did or did not change in her experience in the CFL classroom during the semester. At the beginning of the study, although both of her oral and written work indicated her strong ability in the target language, scoring the highest for all the assessments, she was in general very quiet in class, and didn't seem to be comfortable to initiate questions or conversations during our interactive work such as the open conversation activities or other types of group or whole class work. To reflect on her experience, she wrote "I've always been quiet in class all my life. In Korea, not like in America, we don't always discuss things in class although I attended international school for quite a few years, so I think I am a good listener, but not a good talker, although I know all the stuff we are doing in class, and I've been here in America for three years, I still don't talk in class as some of my American classmates". It is clear here that JT's previous learning experience affected her current learning strategies in the CFL classroom. The cultural differences between her Korean school classroom experience and her current American experience affected her orientation to interactive learning in the classroom. Although JT had been in the American school for three years, she was still struggling with speaking up in class at times. However, during the course of the semester, her view gradually changed as she observed others and participated in the daily open conversations and other interactive peer work. In her reflection journals, she wrote,

Zhe ji ge xing qi de zhong wen ke hen you yi si.... Wo hen xi huan wo men de zi you dui hua, yin wei wo men ke yi chang chang lian xi hen sui bian de yu fa he xin ci. Yi qian wo jue de he lao shi shuo hua, wo xue hen duo nan de yu fa he xin de dong xi. Ke shi zhe ji

ge xing qi de zi you dui hua ye hen you yong. Wo zhi dao de ci you shi hou wang le zen me shuo, he tong xue shuo hua bang wo xiang na xie ci, hen you yong. (10/30/2007)

[Translation: These few weeks, the Chinese class is very interesting... I very much like our free conversations, because we can often practice very causal grammar and new words. Before, I felt talking with teacher, I (could) learn a lot of difficult grammar and new things. But the free conversations these few weeks (are) very useful. The words I know I forgot sometimes how to say (them), with classmates talk I think those words, very useful.] (10/30/2007)

In another writing, she continued to comment on her opinions about peer interaction:

... yi qian wo jue de bang zhu tong xue hen hao, ke shi wo zi ji bu neng xue hen duo xin dong xi. Zuo tian de role-play lian xi wo hen xi huan, sui ran wo shuo hen duo de han yu bang zhu wo de xiao zu, ke shi wo shuo de shi hou, wo dei xiang hen duo, na ge process dui wo shi hen hao de lian xi. Wo yi qian bu jue de zhong yao, xian zai wo jue de hen zhong yao. (11/16/2007)

[Translation: ... before I felt that helping classmates very good, but I myself can't learn a lot of things. Yesterday's role-play exercise I liked a lot, although I spoke a lot (to) help my group, (but) when I spoke, I had to think a lot, that 'process' was a very good practice for me. I before didn't think (it) important, (but) now I think it very important.] (11/16/2007)

JT, explained in these journals, her change of viewing peer interaction in language learning. She admitted that before she felt she could only learn a lot of 'difficult grammar and new things' from the teacher, but after the few weeks of doing peer interactive work such as the 'zi you dui hua' (free conversations), she felt that she could use the words she often forgot with talking to her classmates which was very useful. She also felt before that helping classmates were good,

but it didn't help her own learning much. However, now she felt the 'process' of talking to others during peer work, even it was 'helping the group', was a good practice for her and it was 'very important' to learning the language.

Activity theory acknowledges the changing role of learners as they participate in communicative activities with others. JT's writings show her changing view about peer interactions in learning a foreign language as she was exposed to the open conversation activity and other peer interactive tasks in the CFL classroom. Her previous language learning experience was more of teacher-fronted classrooms in which she learned to value the teacher-student interactions rather than peer interactions in the language classroom. As she was exposed to more interactive learning activities with peers, she started to expand and change her views on language learning in classroom situations as illustrated by her reflection journals as well as her informal comments on her experiences. Consequently, she adjusted her learning strategies to more active participation in peer learning tasks than before.

Participation in Peer Interaction and L2 Development

JT's data of peer interaction work also show her behavioral adjustment during the course of the study. At the beginning of the study, JT was a quieter student during the open conversation activity, taking more of a passive role in participation. However, as the time passed, she became more active in initiating conversations and providing answers to her peers in the activity. As illustrated in the following excerpt, during the long segment of the conversation, JT was pretty

quiet until she identified an error, when she very politely initiated a question to repair in a very indirect way in line 18.

Excerpt 1A (10/30/2007)

- 1 MD: Ni men de zhou mo zen me yang?
How was your weekend?
- 2 TW: Ah, wo, wo he ji ge xue sheng kan (le) dian ying.
Ah, I, I, and a few classmates go (error: should be 'kan le'=went) to watch (a) movie.
- 3 MD: Shen me dian ying?
What movie?
- 4 TW: Wo men kan (le) "Smith Xian Sheng he Smith Tai Tai".
We watch ((error: should be 'kan le' to indicate past tense)) "Mr. and Mrs. Smith".
- 5 MD: Hao bu hao kan?
(Was it) good to watch? Or (was it) fun to watch?
- 6 TW: wo xi huan. Ni men zhou mo zuo shen me?
I like (it). What did you do the weekend?
- 7 PL: Wo qu kan da xue... (hhh) wo bu zai
I go look at college...((error: should be 'kan le' to indicate past tense)) haha, I was not (here).
- 8 TW: Ni qu shen me da xue?
You go what college? Or what college (will) you go?
- 9 PL: Wellesley da xue.
Wellesley College.
- 10 MD: ni xiang (+) er (+) xiang zuo shen me gong zuo? Ah::, after college ((English))?
You want to do what work? Ah... after college?
- 11 PL: um:: wo bu zhi dao.... Oh, wo xiang zuo hai zi yi sheng (hhh...), Laoshi, hai zi yi sheng, dui bu dui?
I don't know... Oh, I want to be child doctor (laughing), teacher, child doctor, is it right?
- 12 T: Wo men han yu shuo 'xiao er ke yi sheng'.
We say 'Xiao Er Ke Yi Sheng' (pediatrician) in Chinese.
- 13 PL: Xiao er ke yi sheng. Xiao, e::: xiao er ke yi sheng. Wo xiang zuo xiao er ke yi sheng.
Pediatrician. Pie::: pie:diation. I want to be (a) pediatrician.
- 14 XL: Ni tiao wu hen hao, ni bu tiao wu?
You dance so well, you don't dance? ((error: should be 'you don't want to dance (in college)?))

- 15 PL: Wo tiao wu zai da xue, ke shi wo xiang dang hai zi... e, xiao ..en.. en xiao er ke yi sheng.
I dance in college ((Grammar error: English sentence order, should be 'wo zai da xue tiao wu' instead)), but I want to be (a) child... er, pediatrician.
- 16 XL: WEI SHEN ME?
Why?
- 17 PL: wo bu zhi dao... oh, wo.. wo.. wo xi huan hai zi. Wo xiang zuo hai zi gong zuo.
I don't know... oh, I ... I ... I like children. I want to do child work ((error: work with children – he hai zi you guan de gong zuo))
- 18 JT: he hai zi you guan de gong zuo? ((correct form for work relevant to children))
Work that is related to children?
- 19 PL: he ... dui, dui, he hai zi ... you guan?
to... yes, yes, (work) related to children?..
- 20 JT: you guan de gong zuo.
the work related to...
- 21 PL: you guan de gong zuo. Dui, wo xi huan hai zi, suo yi wo xiang he hai zi...mmm.. m..m... you guan de gong zuo.
The work related to... Correct, I like children, so I want to with child, er...er...er ... (do) work related to children.

This was generally her approach in participation in dialogic interactions with her peers during group phase at the beginning of the study, in which she appeared to be quiet and not interested in the activity, but actually attentive the whole time in her own way. It needs to be noted here that participation in the same activity doesn't have to be approached the same way. Within SLA research in the framework of activity theory, the concept of 'agency' is divergently expressed. As Coughlan and Duff (1994) have argued, what is often conceived of as a 'fixed task' or activity is really quite variable, not only across subjects but within the same subject at different times' (1994, p. 174). For JT, although choosing a more silent way to participate in group peer communicative activity,

she still exhibited her cognitive process of communicating with others through listening intently to her peers as her way of engagement in the social interaction. However, this strategy was later adjusted to a more active one as her view on peer interaction in classroom language learning changed, which is illustrated by Excerpt 2A and 3A below. At the beginning of excerpt 2A that is representative of her interaction patterns during the second half of the study, JT would frequently initiate a topic to get the group started to discuss during the open conversation activity at the beginning of class. Excerpt 3A shows her eager involvement in participation in a debate task. Her strategy adjustment in participation shows that the process of participating and being exposed to peer interactive activity in the CFL classroom mediates learners' thinking as well as their learning strategies in acquiring a second language.

Excerpt 2A (11/16/2007)

- 22 JT: Gan en jie wo qu Boston, ni men ne?
Thanksgiving I go (to) Boston, (and) how about you (guys)?
- 23 PL: wo hui jia, qu New York, chi fire chicken, hahaha ((laughing, classmates laughing in the background))
I go home, go (to) New York, eat 'fire chicken' (literally – turkey) (laughters)
- 24 JM: huo ji, huo ji, hahaha
Turkey, turkey, hahaha
- 25 XL: er... wo, wo.. qu Vermont, nong cun, ni men qu da cheng shi, wo bu xi huan da cheng shi.
Uh... I.. I.. go (to) Vermont, countryside, you go (to) big cities, I don't like big city.
- 26 JM: wo xi huan da cheng shi!
I like big city!
- 27 XL: yin wei ni zhu Hong Kong!
Because you live Hong Kong!

- 28 JM: Da cheng shi you hen duo hao wanr de dong xi. Vermont nong cun you shen me ((laughing))?
Big city has many fun things. Vermont countryside has what ((laughing))?
- 29 TW: Kong qi, kong qi...er, er... xin xian!
Air, air, uh, um, fresh!
- 30 PL: ke shi sheng huo shi hen uh uh (++) dan diao!
But life is very very uh..uh... tedious (boring)!
- 31 XL: bu bu! Wo de jia hen hao wan.. dong tian hua xue, xia tian, xian tian ke yi chi, what's fire chicken again? ((English))
No no! my home is very fun... winter ski, summer you can... (What's fire chicken again (in Chinese)?- English))
- 32 JM: HUO JI! HUO JI! Ke shi, ke shi (++) um.. nong cun mei you dian ying yuan he da de gou wu zhong xin, mai dong xi Turkey! Kurkey!But, but (++) um.. *Countryside doesn't have movie theatre and big shopping center, buy things*
- 33 JT: ke shi cheng shi hen chao, bu an jing!
But city is noisy, not quiet!
- 34 TW: dui, dui, cheng shi ye you wu ran
Right, right, city also has pollution
- 35 MD: shen me shi 'wu ran'?
What is "wu ran"?
- 36 JT: pollution
- 37 MD: Oh

In excerpt 2A, although JT only initiated the topic on how to spend Thanksgiving break with the peer group and had only a couple of follow-ups in line 33 and line 36 in the group sharing, she made a significant contribution in directing the group to a meaningful conversation topic. This active role of initiation in L2 classroom is very important on two accounts: (1) it provided learners with an opportunity in terms of learning to how to structure social encounters with peers in academic or non-academic contexts, and (2) it also allowed learners to apply their knowledge learned often from written texts to spoken language in a meaningful social exchange with peers. Long (1983) based on his study of questioning patterns by

learners to suggest that negotiation of meaning may be essential to the promotion of interaction necessary for successful second language acquisition. While Excerpt 2A shows JT's more active role in initiating conversations, Excerpt 3A below provides an example of her active engagement in talk-in-action through negotiation of meaning in a peer-learning context.

Excerpt 3A (12/04/2007)

(Note: This excerpt was previously used in Excerpt 15 to illustrate prompting and modeling.)

- 38 XL: Ke shi tong chang ren de guan nian shi ni bu yao mai hen duo yi fu, suo yi ming pai de zhi liang hen hao.
But usually people's view is (that) you do not want to buy many clothes, so brand name's (clothes) quality is very good.
- 39 JT: Dan shi yi jian ming pai de bi liang jian fei ming pai de uh, uh, geng gui, ah (+) suo yi ni bu tai sheng qian um: cong chang how do you say 'long term' ((English))
But one brand name (clothing) compared to two non-brand name (clothing), uh, uh, more expensive, ah, therefore you are not saving money um from long ... how do you say ((English)) 'long term'
- 40 PL: chang:: yuan de: guan dian?
long-term view?
- 41 JT: oh, cong chang yuan de guan dian...
oh, from long-term view...
- 42 XL: Ke shi bu ming pai ((should be 'fei ming pai')) de yi fu zhi liang bu hao, suo yi ni dei mai hen duo de yi fu.
But non-brand name clothing quality not good, therefore you have to buy a lot of clothes.
- 43 JT: Na bu jian de zhe yang. Ah, you de fei ming pai de yi fu zhi liang bu hao, dan shi ah... ah... na...
That is not necessarily so. Ah, some non-brand name clothes' quality not good, but ah...ah...that... ((long pause))
- 44 PL: Ni ke yi...
You can...
- 45 JT: Ni ke yi mai hao, zhi liang hao de fei ming pai ((laughing))

- 46 JM: *You can buy good, good quality non-brand name ((laughing))*
 zong de lai shuo, ming pai de yi fu bi bu ming pai de yi fu de
 um... you yi ge hao,
generally speaking, brand name clothes compared to non-
brand name clothes um... (it) has a good, um...
- 47 XL: yang zi, yang zi
style, style
- 48 JM: style (hhh), bu shi, shi! (hhh)
 Style ((English)) (laughing), no, yes! (laughing)

In Excerpt 3A during a debate exercise, it is evident that JT took a much more active role in participation. Although she also struggled with finding the right words to express herself at times, she demonstrated a strong desire to speak up about her opinions on brand name clothing in the debate (lines 10, 14, and 16). Such peer interactions not only allowed JT to be able to continue her talk with the help of her interlocutors through collaboration, but also shaped her adjusted approach in oral participation. We note that in Excerpt 3A, negotiation for meaning is clearly embedded in the talk of the debate involving comparisons, prompts, assistance, and so on. In addition, JT here is negotiating her social self along with her peers, establishing why she agreed with one opinion than another. The process of negotiating meaning at work provided many learning opportunities for L2 development. This type of peer interactions shows the emergence of learning CFL both in JT's adjusted learning strategies and her language use.

Excerpt 4A, a small portion of her final project, further provides a glimpse into JT's second language development in her effort of integrating language use from peer interaction into her later independent work.

Excerpt 4A (12/14/2007)

... cong chang yuan de guan dian kan, wo hai shi yuan yi zhu nong cun. Sui ran cheng shi de sheng huo hen you yi si, ke shi nong cun de sheng huo dui jian kang geng hao. Kong qi he shui xin xian, ni ke yi diao yu, cai mo gu he shu cai. Ke shi cheng shi de huan ji wu ran hen li hai de, zai jia shang ren tai duo, zheng tian chao chao nao nao.

[Translation: ... from a long-term view, I am still willing to live in the countryside. Although city life is very interesting, countryside life is better to health. Air and rivers are fresh, you can go fishing, pick mushrooms and vegetables. But city's environmental pollution is really bad, in addition (there are) too many people, too noisy all day long.]

In this small segment of JT's narrative, you can see that she correctly and effectively used the expression 'cong chang yuan de guan dian kan' (seeing it from a long-term view), which she struggled with in her debate with peers a couple of weeks earlier (excerpt 3A). Whether this was gained from the actual peer interaction or not, the example provided some evidence of peer dialogic interaction in reinforcing second language acquisition and development. There were many such examples that connected learners' peer interaction data to their later independent work produced in Chinese, which was evident of the learners' continuous development in the second language. But the differentiation of learners' behaviors in participation of an activity such as in JT's case needs future research – whether the two manners of participation – the 'quieter' approach and the 'recognized' active approach – make a difference in learners' L2 development, and to what degree.

JT's assessment data showed her steady progress in achieving better fluency in oral conversations as well as her comfort level in manipulating more topics in both speaking and writing. Based on the ACTFL standards and course goals, JT's performance on every unit test and the final project reflected her improved understanding of the content knowledge about the course. Her work samples including the final project indicated her steady progress of her language skills in all three communication modes, especially in the interpersonal mode of communication. In her role-play and interview performance assessments, JT was able to create opportunities for the peers who worked with her to establish contextually and culturally appropriate dialogues on several topics covered in the course curriculum. She did a beautiful presentation on her final project that incorporated her language skills and cultural knowledge into a narrative. Although there were still errors in both her oral presentation and the computer-typed written document, JT's work showed her strong ability at this level to present effectively in the target language. JT's overall data showed an example of a successful language learner who had a clear goal for learning Chinese and who was able to use all the resources available to her, to reflect, to adapt, to work hard to accomplish her goal of learning the language.

Narrative 2: XB

Personal History Interview Recap and Self Reflection on CFL Learning

XB is a contrasting example to JT. His data show an individual with mixed feelings about learning Chinese. He was also a Korean student but his family had lived in Hong Kong for a few years at the beginning of this study. His Chinese learning background was strong due to his previous experience in a Hong Kong international school. He started taking Spanish in the elementary school in Hong Kong, but later switched to Chinese due to parents' persuasion and encouragement. He felt that he had hit a block in learning Chinese because he said that he had started losing interest in memorizing so many Chinese characters, especially after each long summer. He took Chinese here to continue with the language because of China's growth in the world in recent years and better job possibilities for him in the future. However, despite all of his reasons of taking Chinese, he decided not to continue his Chinese the following year as a senior because he would have met his three-year graduation requirement for foreign languages this year as a junior. According to his father and his friends, XB's passion was in design, which he intended to take as an extra elective course next year, therefore his next year's schedule would not allow him to take Chinese anymore. His father, a multilingual business man, was very supportive of XB's Chinese learning and had led the family to China several times for sightseeing during the previous years. In terms of his language learning experience, according to XB, he would like to find a more effective way to learn

Chinese characters because that was his frustration to continue with the language. In reflecting on his peer learning experience in the CFL classroom, he wrote,

Jin nian, wo men de zhong wen ke yi jing zuo le hen duo huo dong, sui ran jiu shi san ge xing qi. guan yu zhong wen ke de huo dong, wo zui xi huan zuo dui hua, yin wei na rong xu wo men shuo qie shi de (shi ji de) han yu. Wo men de zi you dui hua ye bang wo men jin bu hen kuai. Zhe shi zhen de, yin wei wo men hui geng chang chang shuo han yu, suo yi wo men neng ji zhu sui bian de pian yu (duan yu), na shi hen you bang zhu (de). Ke shi, wo you shi hou jue de, tai duo wen ti invades wo de privacy, suo yi bu xiang shuo hen duo de. (10/5/2007)

[Translation: This year, our Chinese class has already done a lot of activities, although only three weeks. about the activities of the Chinese class, I like the dialogues the most, because that allow(s) us to speak the actual Chinese. Our free conversations help us improve fast. This is real, because we would more often speak Chinese, therefore we can remember casual phrases, that was very helpful. But, I sometimes feel, too many questions invade (English) my privacy (English), so I don't want to speak too much.]
(10/5/2007)

This reflection suggested that XB enjoyed the peer interactive dialogues, which helped him practice 'actual' Chinese, 'improve fast' and also 'help him to remember casual phrases', but he did not necessarily want to be the center of attention during peer interactions at times for the reason of losing his 'privacy'. This reflection on his part may also speak to his personality – a more private person who didn't like to be put on 'spot' in class. Although he admitted that he enjoyed the conversations, he appeared to be often speaking in a very low voice in peer interactive activities, especially the whole-group discussions such as the open conversation time. In doing other assignments, XB also tended to postpone

his work to the last minute or ask for extensions, and the finished work often showed rushed quality with minimum time spent on it. In another reflection journal, XB wrote,

Wo zhi dao wo ying gai fu xi hen duo le he zuo wan zhe ge project (English) xia ge xing qi yi, ke shi zhe me nan zuo zhe ge gong ke, you zong shi hen duo peng you zai wo de fang jian, he zhe ge zhou me zhe me duo you yi si de shi er ke yi zuo. Wo zhi dao wo ying gai nu li dicipline zi ji, ke shi wo you hen duo the gong ke ye bie de ke. Suo yi wo dan xin.... Ke shi I yao nu li, xing qi tian wan shang bu shui jiao. (11/2/2007)

[Translation: I know I should have worked on my review and finish doing the project (by) next Monday, but so hard to do this homework, having many friends in my room all the time, and so many fun things to do this weekend. I know I should try hard, discipline (English) myself, but there are so much work to finish for my other classes, too. So I am worried... but I'll try hard, Sunday night no sleep.] (11/2/2007)

This excerpt reflects XB's inability to focus on his work sometimes and he admitted that he needed to put in more effort and discipline himself more to review for class and finish his project on time. However, he again didn't finish his project on time, but asked for another extension to turn in the written project due to the reasons mentioned in his journal partially: too much work to finish for other classes and lack of sleep the night before. XB's study habits illustrated above in his reflection journal provide a clear link between his intentions, his vague goal of using Chinese in the future, and his actual behavior in learning the language. The journals as well as the class observations analyzed allow a glimpse at his specific language learning strategies employed in the course of specific tasks

such as writing homework, preparing for an oral presentation, or working with peers in class.

In an email sent out to the whole class to elicit a quick English response from the participants for their opinions on peer interaction activities in class, the following is the entire response XB wrote,

Sorry, lao shi, this is so late. I enjoy working with my peers because they say many things that I might have said but didn't, and when the errors are picked out by others, we all learn more. I think feedback on grammar is the most helpful, but anything else is good, too. (XB, Email response, 12/13/2007)

This response again was another example to show XB's tendency when it comes to 'work', finishing up in a quick and rushed quality compared to other students in the class who provided more detailed responses, although his response allowed the researcher to get to know his perception of looking at the peer interactions in class and the importance of grammar feedback in this short writing.

The case of XB offers insights into how a learner's basic orientation towards language learning manifests itself as an actual approach to his CFL study. XB's view on peer interactive work was positive as illustrated above through his own reflections, but his motivation level, and the degree of his effort made towards acquiring the language may have affected the degree of his success in specific areas of developing L2 skills.

Participation in Peer Interaction and L2 Development

XB's classroom peer interaction data show a mixed picture of him as a learner of Chinese. Although he did contribute his share in class peer-to-peer interactions, his postures observed from the video recordings showed his boredom at times during open conversations and other whole-class discussions. However, during role-play and pair work, he seemed to be more engaged in the conversations with his one-pair partner or a smaller group crew in which he had a specific role to play. The examples provided below illustrate how XB approached peer interaction at different times and how it may have affected his L2 development.

In the short excerpt of 5A below, XB responded to Laoshi (teacher) to a general greeting question that he was 'tai lei le' (too tired), and when Laoshi asked 'wei shen me?' (why?), he said he only slept three hours (the night before), which shows again his general issues with time management in the boarding school life.

Excerpt 5A (10/26/2007)

- 49 Laoshi: Ni men jin tian zen me yang?
How are you today?
- 50 Class: hen hao (or bu hao, or hai ke yi)
Very good (or not good, or just so-so)
- 51 Laoshi: Wei shen me? (turning to XB who responded with 'bu hao')
why? (turning to XB who responded with 'not good')
- 52 XB: tai lei le.
Too tired.
- 53 Laoshi: Wei shen me?
why?

- 54 XB: ah, (+) shui jiao san xiao shi (using gesture – raising 3 fingers)
ah, (+) sleep three hours (using gesture to indicate 3 hrs of sleep)

In several other representative examples during group activities such as the open conversations, XB was not an active participant, whose voice was missing in many of the whole group conversations. This echoes with his journal reflections in which he described his uncomfortable feelings towards being asked too many questions. However, in role-play and pair work, XB's data show a different picture of him as a participant of the learning activities.

The following excerpts come from the data of a role-play exercise, and illustrate clearly the collaborative interaction XB was engaged in. These exchanges reveal how the role-play tasks provided the students with more opportunities to attend to form, function, meaning and cultural norm among the targeted features for the unit than the usual classroom discussion. Not only more capable students help the less capable students, but also students of similar abilities co-assist each to achieve better understanding of both linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge through their collaborative interactions. In the process of negotiating several points in the mutual understanding and decision-making, the learners offered each other modified input and feedback and responded with modified output. These negotiations are illustrated in Excerpts 6A, 7A, and 8A, as the participants focused on completing the role-play, in which XB demonstrated his contribution to the collaborative learning of the language.

Excerpt 6A, 7A, and 8A are segments, all based on the same role-play activity that occurred near the end of 10 hour-instruction on a dining unit divided into ten lessons, which is representative of the role-play data. Each lesson in the unit included teacher-led instruction and student-centered communicative activities to be done in pair or groups. In this activity, each student in a group of three or four was given a description of the activity. Based on the information given, they were to act out the situation. The role-play was intended to provide students an opportunity to apply what they had learned from the unit including vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, money expressions, and also cultural information on negotiating payment to the context given.

The role-play activity on dining:

You and your two/three friends are in a Chinese restaurant. You like many different kinds of food, so you discuss the dishes they have with each other, and then with the waiter. After deciding what to order, you start to order dishes and drinks. The experience seems to go very well and everyone likes the dinner. After the dinner, you and your friends discuss how to pay the bill. When the bill comes, you find out that the waiter has overcharged you by \$1.79. You talk to the waiter about it, and finish paying the bill. You all leave the restaurant, happy and content. You ask each other if you want to come again next weekend to try some other dishes.

After reading the directions for the role-play, XB got together with TW and MD in one group. In the following excerpt, the negotiation occurred as the group cast their roles for the role-play.

Excerpt 6A (11/9/2007)

- 55 MD: Na wo men tao lun ba.
Then let us discuss.
- 56 XB: OK, what are we supposed to do? ((English))
- 57 TW: Shuo han yu! (laughing) ni xiang shi waiter ((English)) ma?
Speak Chinese! (laughing) do you want (to) be waiter?
- 58 XB: No! Wo xiang chi fan!
No! I want (to) eat!
- 59 MD: fu wu yuan! Fu wu yuan! Waiter shi fu wu yuan.
Waiter! Waiter! Waiter is fu wu yuan ((in Chinese)).
- 60 TW: oh, fu:: wu yuan?
Oh, wai::ter?
- 61 MD: dui. I often forget how to say it, too ((English)). Ni xiang sh::
uh uh, become? Shi? (++) fu wu yuan ma?
*Right. I often forget how to say it, too ((English)). Do you
want to be:: uh uh, become ((English))? (to) be?(++) waiter?*
- 62 TW: shi is all right, isn't it ((English))?
'shi' is all right, isn't it ((English))?
- 63 XB: Shi is OK, oh, we can use DANG ((correct word here)), to
become, to be?
*'shi' is OK, oh, we can use 'dang – to become', to be
((English))?*
Remember ((English))? Wo xiang dang lao shi. Wo xiang
dang gong cheng shi.
*Remember ((English))? I want (to) be (a) teacher. I want (to)
be (an) engineer.*
- 64 MD: Dui, dang, dang ((correct word))! Ni xiang dang fu wu yuan
ma?
*Correct, become, become! Do you want to become (to be)
waiter?*
- 65 TW: Bu xiang! Uh uh... Wo he XB dang nan peng you he nu peng
you, hhh, zen me yang?
*Not want! Uh uh... I and XB become boy friend and girl frind,
(laughing), how about that?*
- 66 XB: Whatever... wo shi nan peng you!
Whatever... I am (to be) boy friend!
- 67 MD: OK, wo dang fu wu yuan then.
OK, I('ll) become waiter then.

In this exchange, when the verb 'to be' in this situation was negotiated as shown in line 61, when MD hesitated about the usage of the verb 'shi' (literally, is as he

verb “be”), both TW and XB agreed that it was all right to use ‘shi’ here, but not completely sure. Then XB in the same turn remembered that the verb ‘dang’ would be more appropriate here in this context, which is actually the correct verb to use here, literally meaning ‘to become’ or ‘to be’ in translation. In the same turn, XB also tried to provide two examples of using the verb “dang” to explain to his peers. Here XB clearly engaged in using the language constructively in collaboration with his peers, not only to encourage the flow of the conversation, but also providing assistance to his peers in language use.

In this excerpt, the three participants not only focus on the content of the task by beginning to cast roles in the target language, but also talk about linguistic knowledge - the related language episodes shown here such as the correct word choice or assisting each other with providing correct vocabulary in their initial dialogue of the role-play activity. The implementation of the strategies of planning and negotiating for roles has led the three participants to verbalize not only the correct vocabulary and verb form needed but also the function it is serving in the current context of communication in the target language. Their verbalization as seen in Excerpt 6A serves several functions. For both speakers and hearers it focuses attention to the content; it externalizes hypotheses about their linguistic knowledge; it provides possible solutions to problems encountered, and it mediates their implementation of such strategic behavior as they are planning and negotiating for meaning in the dialogic process. Through the participants’ collaborative effort, they are able to produce the correct words and

appropriate verb form accurately in the context, which helps them in the future use of the practiced linguistic knowledge evidenced in their later verbal interactions regarding the use of the words in this excerpt.

From a sociocultural point of view, the learning condition is crucial if learners are to feel impelled to engage in a shared activity (Lee, 2004). XB might not have engaged himself in using the target language if it were a whole group learning activity. Excerpt 7A below from the same role-play activity illustrates how learners through scaffolding are challenged to produce coherent verbalization that not only attends to linguistic knowledge but also goes much beyond linguistic accuracy. While students at the intermediate level of proficiency still struggle to produce correct grammar and lexical items, the role-play exercises afford the learners great opportunities to practice and negotiate their linguistic knowledge to produce more appropriate language both in terms of language use and cultural appropriateness of the target language and culture in their dialogic process.

Upon finishing up dinner in the role play in a previous segment which is not shown here, MD leaves to get the bill, and when he returns with a pretended paper bill, TW and XB start talking about how to pay the bill shown in Excerpt 7A below. The data in this excerpt further reveals that peer-peer interactions in role-play exercises provide second language students opportunities to experience the target language in context to learn how to interpret and exchange meanings for real communication. Although a lot of cultural information is introduced in the instructional phase of the lesson, students often don't apply the cultural concepts

to their everyday communicative activities in the target language. Instead many times they would apply the concepts and understandings of their familiar L1 culture into the L2 context as shown in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 7A (11/9/2007)

- 68 TW: xie xie. XB, wo men fu yi ban ((error: missing an adverb before the verb 'fu'- should be: wo men yi ren fu yi ban)), zen me yang?
Thanks. XB, we pay half ((error: should be – we each pays half)), how does that sound?
- 69 XB: hao, hao, hhhh.. ni fu yi ban? Hhh nan peng you bu uh uh mai:: mai dan?
Good, good, hahaha ((laughter))... you pay half? Hahaha... boy friend not uh uh bu::y buy (the) bill?
- 70 TW: hhh, dui, nan peng you ((pointing at XB, laughing)) ying gai mai dan!
Hahaha, right, boy friend ((pointing to XB, laughing)) should buy (the) bill!
- 71 XB: Bu, bu.. actually, Chinese fight for the bill, don't they? So we should fight for the bill.
No, no... acually ((starting to make a comment in English)), Chinese fight for the bill, don't they? So we should fight for the bill.
- 72 MD: Dui ah! Ni men ah ah qi:: qi:: ang mai dan!
(That's) right! You (guys) ah ah fi::fi::ght (to) pay (the) bill!
- 73 TW: qiang?
Fight?
- 74 XB: Dui, dui.
Right, right.
- 75 TW: qi::ang, qiang, qiang ((saying it to himself))
fi::ght, fight, fight ((saying it to himself))
- 76 XB: Wo men ying gai ... uh (+) ying gai qiang zhe fu qian. Um um... how about wo qu ce suo, ni fu qian, ran hou, wo shuo wo men xia ge xing qi chi fan wo dou mai dan, hhh.
We should...uh (+) should fight to pay (the) bill. Um um.. how about ((English)) I go to bathroom, you pay money, then, I say we next week eat food I('ll) pay all the bill(s), hahaha ((laughing)).
- 77 TW: Hao zhu yi, hhh.

Good idea, hahaha ((laughing)).

In this segment of the role-play, TW in his turn at line 68 initiated a proposal in terms of how to pay the bill, which shows what teenagers often do in American culture – to pay your own share of the bill. In response to TW's question in line 69, XB hints TW that a boy friend should pay for the bill, although it is only a role-play 'boy friend' in this case. Here it is an interesting concept most people would agree that in both Chinese and American culture, the man (or boy friend) pays the bill in a traditional sense. In this short adjacency pair exchange, XB evidently tries to make it 'real', not only just speaking the language, but also tries to make more sense contextually that works the best for the situation in the target language culture, which is further shown in his next turn, line 71. XB, in this turn, realizes a more culturally appropriate reaction to the situation, so he suggests to 'fight for the bill' in English to continue with the role-play.

Here it is interesting to note that most students have never had the experience of dealing with the situation with native speakers of Chinese and none of them have lived in China for an extended period of time. Therefore, they might not know how to authentically deal with the situation appropriately in terms of culture, although the concept is introduced in the instructional materials. TW's initiation of the payment proposal shows his American way of thinking, but through the collaborative dialogue shown in the short adjacency pair, TW and XB together orient themselves towards a better understanding of using the target language appropriately in the situation, thus language as a mediating tool helps

the participants not only develop their language proficiency but also improve their understanding of cultural concepts imbedded in the language. Throughout this role-play, it is evident that XB stays engaged in the talk-in-action, and his contribution to more effective language use in this peer interaction.

Embedded in the short exchange, linguistic knowledge is being checked during the negotiation of meaning. When XB first in line 71 mentions 'fighting for the bill' idea, MD seems to understand immediately by providing the version in Chinese, although he hesitates to produce the verb 'qiang – to fight' in his suggestion. However, TW initially in his turn in line 73 shows confusion with a rising intonation of saying 'qiang', but through repeating the term to himself three times in line 75, it seems that he is attempting to understand the meaning of the verb through private speech in the problem solving process. TW's ending turn (line 77) seems to show his achievement of understanding the verb item 'qiang' and XB's suggestion of that TW pays the bill in his absence in the previous turn. Together in this collaborative dialogue the participants co-construct the understanding of both the linguistic item 'qiang' as well as the cultural practice of paying the bill appropriately.

An explanation of the Chinese custom of paying bills in such a situation here would clarify any confusion. Chinese cultural practices are derived from a long period of history and reflect the social structures, traditional ideas, attitudes, and values of the Chinese people. Fighting over the bill is one of Chinese customs. People can get physical to fight for the bill, so it is not rare to see a few

friends grab each other in front of a restaurant counter fighting to pay. It is common to see people who fake going to the restroom when in fact are secretly taking care of the bill. If you have been invited to eat, you can make an attempt to pay the bill, but you should not actually pay the bill as you may make the host to lose face. If someone calls you to go out for dinner, he or she is expected to pay. Nonetheless, fighting over the bill is always expected in Chinese culture and is always good to gain points. In addition, as a general rule of thumb, if you are invited this time, you are always expected to do something in return, but people would not expect you to do anything if the dinner is to show their gratitude for your help or service. This custom reflects the traditional Chinese value on achieving good human relationship. Cheng (1987) states that one cannot understand an individual unless one understands the network of relations. In a Confucian view of social relationships, the individual and the social are intertwined with rights and responsibilities, with certain relationships paramount: 'those between sovereign and subject, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend' (Bond and Hwang 1986, p215). Students who study Chinese need to understand the cultural customs that associate with the traditional values of the people so that they are able to communicate effectively and appropriately when they use the L2 in communication.

The analysis of Excerpt 7A above provides evidence of how learners facilitate the negotiation process through each other's scaffolding in using

language, either L1 or L2 to achieve the goal of building knowledge in L2 in their role-play activities in the CFL classroom. The data also reveals that role-play exercises provide the students with more opportunities to attend to relationships of linguistic form, function, meaning, as well as cultural knowledge compared to other classroom activities. In the process, XB grouped with two other participants demonstrated very engaged participation in creating the role-play for dining. First, he was negotiating the meaning of using the verb 'shi' in the context (Excerpt 6A), and then in Excerpt 7A, he offered suggestions to make the verbalization culturally appropriate to the topic in the role-play, which is an important contribution to meaningful negotiation in the context of L2 learning and development. Cultural learning, as stated in the ACTFL goals, is very important for L2 learners who should develop cultural understanding as they develop their language proficiency. Indeed, as for any CFL learners, it is much easier to make sense out of the Chinese language when learners come to a true understanding of the important linguistic and cultural variations of the Chinese-speaking world. The Chinese-specific standards (1999) from the ACTFL guidelines emphasizes the practices of culture: "in the understanding of social patterns and the practice of conventions, students must be aware that Chinese views of society, government, family roles, and interpersonal relationships have similarities and differences from their own" (ACTFL Chinese Standards, p.129). XB's suggestion of bringing the cultural practice of 'fighting for the bill' into the role-play is an exemplary progress indicator that shows his understanding of the custom and the

importance of using it in the appropriate context. The role of peer interactions here is important for both XB and his peers' L2 development because 1) the negotiation brings an awareness for his peers to use cultural knowledge in their utterances in using the target language, and 2) the actual interaction provides XB, the language learner a unique opportunity to apply that knowledge of cultural practice into the real communication in the target language.

The findings of XB's peer interaction data are particularly interesting because he, on one hand, exhibited the behaviors of an unsuccessful learner, but on the other hand, he demonstrated qualities of a very engaged successful learner. It is possible for a 17-year old adolescent that how learning tasks are designed may affect tremendously his language learning behavior and orientations such as what XB's data have shown here. This raises questions on pedagogical concerns. Previous sections in this chapter illustrated the types of interactions that stimulate mental activity and assisted performance that resulted in effective learning among the participants, but pedagogical issues are not dealt with in the scope of this study.

In addition to his journals and classroom interaction data, XB's assessment data also showed his struggles in preparing for unit tests and finishing up the final project with a partner on time. His final project for the term was an integrated product of language skills and cultural knowledge from the materials covered. He paired up with TW simply because TW was in the same dorm with him. As they found time to work together on the development of the

project, they both said it was a worthwhile learning experience in terms of incorporating the language into an integrated project. However, XB still found it hard to put enough time and efforts into it so that he could have contributed more to a better quality piece in their final presentation for both spoken and written parts of the project. His performances in both the oral and written sections of the presentation reflected both positive and negative aspects of his learning – his achievement of better understanding of the language in several areas as well as his lack of preparation for meeting the objectives of the assignment. Overall, the two students seemed to work together well because they had no instances of friction and engaged each other in a friendly manner as shown in their recorded interactions during class time. XB also acknowledged his partner TW's push that challenged him and got him more engaged in completing the work, although mostly it was indirect. If it were by himself, he said that he would not have finished the work as effectively as with a motivated and organized peer. In comparison to his individual work, it is true that his project and other work with peers indicated more effectiveness as well as better quality, and in turn, he seemed to be pushed to engage himself much more with peers and learn more than to work alone. The most striking feature of XB and TW's collaboration was the compromise of the two in their approaches and knowledge of the target language. XB was clearly more knowledgeable in overall cultural understanding of the Chinese language because of his experience of living in Hong Kong and his similar cultural heritage of Korean culture which shares many characteristics

of Chinese culture. TW, on the other hand, was a very organized and motivated student who clearly knew how to study more effectively to reach the goal he set for himself. They provided a scaffolding experience for each other in the process of working together, the same as the one shown in a previous example (excerpt 8) when XB suggested the culturally appropriate conversation in a role-play. TW in turn helped XB to get to the work in terms of time management and study strategies. As pointed out by Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001), an individual's history will impact learning strategies and motives for studying the L2, but it is also critical to affirm that agency may transform in response to ongoing and anticipated activity. Although XB wasn't interested in doing the Chinese work at times, he as a learner had to respond to his immediate community of practice – the expectation, within a defined community of practice, in which TW was not only his partner and friend who mattered to XB, but also seemed to impact XB's 'agency' through the participation of the mutual activity.

XB's overall data reflected some achievement in improved oral fluency, but there were no obvious changes in other areas of his language learning and development. For XB, there might be other factors contributed to small changes over time. The evidence from XB's assessment data suggests that learners' motivation and clear goals are closely connected with their success of language learning experiences. The analysis also reveals that students who are not as motivated to learn the language can benefit from peer collaborative work both in and outside of the classroom because the process of interacting with one another

promote both language learning and study strategy building. The compromise of each learner's language and cultural knowledge provides opportunities for learners to negotiate for meaning in peer interactions.

Narrative 3: TW

Personal History Interview Recap and Self Reflection on CFL Learning

TW is a senior American student from a small town in the Northeast of the US, whose parents are both college professors. Prior to the school, TW took a little bit of several languages: German, Spanish, and Latin. The reason for him to take Chinese came from his older brother who took Chinese in college and then spent time in China. TW heard a lot of positive stories about China and Chinese culture from his brother. After three years of learning Chinese, TW thought the most challenging part of learning Chinese was the gap between his understanding of the language and the huge efforts put into the real mastery of the language, namely, speaking it with ease. Despite the difficulties TW described, he had a very clear goal of linking his current experience of learning the language with his future: to major in international affairs in college and use and extend the knowledge of learning Chinese to learning other languages in the future. TW had never been to China prior to the beginning of the study, but he would like to participate in a study abroad program for a semester or a year when he goes to college. TW did get into Columbia University in early admission in December by the end of this study. He was a very strong student in all his

disciplines and a very responsible individual who treated his learning opportunities seriously. In terms of talking about his Chinese experience, he, like others, said that this year he had been more active in participating although his efforts varied in each class. Although TW seemed to be happy with his current experience in class, he said he would like more opportunities to talk to native speakers outside of the classroom to enhance his skills of speaking. The family was very supportive of his Chinese endeavors because both his big brother and his dad 'know the value of learning languages" and always encouraged him to go for something new in his educational experiences.

TW is another successful example of learning Chinese. He believed that the process of working with each assignment in Chinese would definitely help equip him to learn other languages in the future, so he treated each learning opportunity very seriously. As he wrote in his reflection journal,

Xue han yu ke yi bang wo hen duo. Yin wei ta he bie de wai yu bu yi yang, suo yi wo jue de xue hui zhe ge wai yu ke yi bang wo xiang bu tong. Wo hen xiang he wo de peng you qu wai guo you lan. Wo ye xiang zuo yi ge fan yi, ke shi wo de han yu bu tai hao. Wo ma ma de yi ge peng you shi fa guo ren, ta zai zhong guo shi fan yi liang nian. Ta jue de zheng zhi hen you si si, ke shi fan yi hen xin ku. Wo jue de nu li xue han yu shi hen you yong (de). (10/30/2007)

[Translation: Learning Chinese can help me a lot. Because it is different from other foreign languages, (therefore) I think learning this foreign language can help me think differently. I really want to travel in foreign countries with my friends. I also want to be an interpreter, but my Chinese is not very good. My mother's friend is French; he worked as an interpreter for two years in China. He thinks politics is very interesting, but (doing) interpretation is hard work. I think studying Chinese diligently is very useful.]
(10/30/2007)

This excerpt reveals TW's goal oriented perspective in learning Chinese. He constantly reminded himself of the goal of learning the language and tried to make connections to other areas of knowledge building through learning the language. An analysis of his journals and interviews shows that in the course of TW's life experience, he had come to regard foreign languages as useful and desirable, and his personal experience had led him to form a clear goal in the CFL classroom, acquiring as much as he could of the second language to help him with his education as well as his real world desire in the future.

In viewing peer interactions in the CFL classroom, TW wrote in his English email response,

“Interacting with other students in Chinese is nice because it provides support. First of all, it's confidence boosting to be working with people on my level. Second, it allows other students to correct me of a word or grammar I've forgotten. I try to remember what the other students say correctly and incorrectly for future reference, and to pick up their cues when they can't understand what I am saying. I find that the most useful feedback is simply whether other students can understand me or not. Sometimes they don't even tell me whether they know what I am saying, but make it obvious otherwise, with facial expressions, or whatever. So, working with peers in these conversational opportunities allows me to observe and learn from others. It has provided countless opportunities for me to see how others talk, make the same errors that I would have made myself, which bring a lot of consciousness in me to correct and produce the right words and grammar.” (Email response, 12/4/2007)

TW was clear about the importance of interacting with peers on two levels – confidence boosting and getting feedback through error correction and assistance from peers. He mentioned another important factor for self performance check through peer non-verbal reactions such as the facial

expressions or other cues, which hasn't generally been well studied in L2 research before. His response to peer interactional benefits also speaks to instructional strategy choices of the class, which will be discussed in the section of the main research question. Creating opportunities for peer interaction in the target language is crucial for learners to develop their listening and oral skills in the classroom setting. TW's data provide evidence again and again that social interaction among peers in the CFL classroom has significant impact on learners' L2 development, especially in the interpretive and presentational modes of using the language.

Participation in Peer Interaction and L2 Development

TW's classroom interaction data also show his consistent efforts in engaging himself in conversations with peers either actively initiating talks or through error corrections. Although at the beginning of the study, TW was observed to be quieter, listening intensively to his peers, and talked less than later in the study, he seemed to be acquiring confidence and facility in L2 interaction through progressively expanded involvement in the CFL interactional routines as he became more and more actively involved in the class participation with a variety of interactive activities. His data show that in the earlier period of the study, he tended to listen or only responded to others' questions, but gradually he started to initiate more questions, taking a more active role in the peer interactive routines in the CFL classroom. Classroom studies (Ohta, 1994, van Lier, 1988) have shown that student participation in the classroom is

generally confined to the response turn – students seldom participate in initiation or follow-up turns in teacher-fronted classroom settings. Peer interaction opportunities designed into the curriculum of instructional settings allow students to explore their own strengths and weakness by more actively involving themselves in the conversations in the target language. TW's growing comfort level in speaking among peers and his amount of production in Chinese revealed both his improved linguistic ability in presentational mode and his overall confidence in using the target language through observing and engaging himself in the peer interactive routines. This shows developmentally that TW in his own pace changed from a quieter participant who used minimal follow-up turns to a more active one who initiated more conversations and used follow-up turns with more spontaneity.

In terms of language use, excerpt 8A below shows more specifically the type of peer interactions TW engaged in, which helped him develop the language skills in specific areas that he was able to use in his later independent work. The excerpt is from a peer-revision dialogue on a piece of writing exercise.

Excerpt 8A (11/9/2007)

- 78 JT: zhe ge (zhu xiao) uh (+) yi bian hao, uh yi bian bu hao?
This (living at school) uh (+) is good, uh at the same time not good?
- 79 TW: wo shuo it is good in one aspect and bu hao in the other
I said it is good in on one hand and not good on the other
- 80 JT: wo jue de (+) um ni ying gai shuo 'yi fang mian', bu shi 'yi bian'
I think um you should say 'on one hand', not 'at the same time'

- 81 TW: ah, yi fang mian?
Ah, on one hand?
- 82 JT: Dui, yi bian ... yi bian shi at the same time ((English))
Right, yi bian... yi bian is 'at the same time' ((English))
- 83 TW: wo shuo, hen hao he bu hao at the same time ((English))
I say, very good and not good at the same time ((English))
- 84 JT: Ke shi, um.. ke shi, yi bian ... yi bian shi two actions happen
at the same time ((English))
*But, um.. but, 'yi bian... yi bian' is two actions happen at the
same time*
- 85 TW: uh?
Un?
- 86 JT: ni ke yi shuo:: ah, wo yi bian chi dong xi:: yi bian kan dian
shi, ke shi here...
*You can say:: ah, I eat at the same time watch TV, but
here...*
- 87 TW: Na, na, wo shuo, yi fang mian zhu xiao hen hao? Ah::
*Then, then, I say, on one hand living at the school is good?
Ah...*
- 88 JT: Ni ke yi, ni ke yi shuo, zhu xiao first...
You can, you can say, living at the school first...
- 89 TW: um, zhu xiao yi fang mian hen hao yi fang mian bu hao?
*Um, living at the school is very good on one hand, not good
on the other?*
- 90 JT: Dui, dui.
Right, right.

In this excerpt, TW misused the expression 'yi bian ... yi bian' in his writing, and JT in line 78 questioned the correctness of the usage. TW in his following turn tried to clarify what he intended to say, but JT pointed out the error and directed TW to the correct use of the expression in this short episode. Although the meaning of 'yi bian ... yi bian...' in translation seems to fit in the context, it is the wrong usage in Chinese in this case and the correct usage should be 'yi fang mian... yi fang mian'. TW at the end of this excerpt produced the corrected utterance, clearly guided by JT. JT in this interaction was obviously the more

capable student who knew both expressions well enough to illustrate the usage with an example for her peer. After a few constructive turns, TW clearly understood how he should use the expression correctly in the sentence in the end as he had intended in line 89. The appropriation process is visible in the interaction, which shows his increasing understanding of the usage that leads to the correct output.

It is interesting to note that in excerpt 9A TW used the same expression 'yi fang mian... yi fang mian' in his independent work a few weeks later, and this time he used it correctly and effectively in the given context. It shows TW's mastery of the construction from being unable to use it correctly on his own to being able to produce it correctly in his independent work, first through collaborative activity, then on his own. Although the author here does not claim that TW has fully mastered this construction from this particular interaction with JT only, this peer collaboration certainly provides clear evidence that JT functions as an important resource for TW to master the construction within the correct context through the dialogic process. This echoes to TW's earlier comment on peer interactions in language learning in which peer feedback in different ways is very important for learners' appropriation process of acquiring the target language.

Excerpt 9A (12/6/2007)

Wo ren wei yi ge gao zhong xue sheng bu ying gai zhi mai ming pai
yi fu. Ming pai yi fu yi fang mian you hao chu yi fang mian mei you
hao chu. Sui ran ming pai yi fu you hao de zhi liang, ke shi tai gui

le. Hen duo fei ming pai de yi fu wu mei jia lian, er qie hen pian yi.
Wo men shi xue sheng, bu zhuan qian, suo yi ying gai sheng qian.
Bu ying gai mai ming tian de yi fu.

[Translation: I think a high school student should not buy brand name clothing. Brand name clothing has good points on one hand but also bad points on the other hand. Although a lot of brand name clothing have good qualities, they are too expensive. Many non-brand name clothes are good quality with cheap prices. We are students, do not make any money, therefore (we) should save money. (We) should not buy brand name clothing.]

This excerpt also provides a glimpse into TW's oral delivery of the project he worked with XB at the end of the semester. His efforts were more consistent in comparison to his project partner XB discussed earlier. His final oral delivery of the project was much more polished and refined as shown in this short excerpt, which showed his efforts and serious preparation to present and demonstrate his ability of speaking Chinese in the presentational mode successfully on the topic. TW started much earlier with the formation of the project, initiating questions about language use and cultural appropriateness in the dialogues of the project in class. His intense efforts of producing the project reveal his view on language learning. This was consistent with his clear goal of learning the language in order to use it both in his future career of doing international affairs and promoting the learning of other languages. The ACTFL Chinese standards focus on the outcomes of foreign language learning. TW's integrated final project presented his learning outcomes which centered on his ability to communicate his knowledge of the target language, and his development of insight through making connections and comparisons to Chinese culture and his current understanding

of his own world at the boarding school. Although he was still struggling with using words and structures constantly, his improvement in using the language both orally and in writing was evident in his overall data for this level. Activity theory claims that the initial motive for engaging in an activity is what determines its outcome, which explains TW's data in a convincing manner.

Narrative 4: JM

Personal History Interview Recap and Self Reflection on CFL Learning

JM was a 10th grade American student, the youngest in the class, and his family had lived in Hong Kong for several years due to parents' job requirement at the beginning of the study. He started learning Chinese in 6th grade in a Hong Kong international school where Chinese was a requirement. Before taking Chinese, he learned a little bit of Spanish and his parents both spoke French. His older brother who also studied Chinese at the same boarding school graduated last year and now studies at Cornell University, majoring in East Asian studies. He had a lot of respect for his older brother, his role model, who sometimes spoke Chinese with him at home when they went home during school breaks. JM felt spoken Chinese was the easiest part for him and he always enjoyed conversations. However, writing characters presented a lot of challenges because it was very difficult to write and it was boring for him to memorize, especially in writing. He really enjoyed living in Hong Kong and he planned to work in Hong Kong after college like his parents. He felt pretty cool to be able to

speaking Chinese both in Hong Kong and in the US when he was able to communicate with Chinese friends. JM had traveled to China with his family for several times before, and he felt his cultural knowledge about the Chinese way of living was pretty good. His parents were very supportive of his learning Chinese and they tried to provide opportunities for him to visit China in the summer and hope one day he would be a fluent speaker of Chinese. In terms of class participation, JM felt that he had matured a lot compared to the previous year and he was able to stay more focused and participate more often, especially in free conversations in class. In one of his language reflection journals, he wrote,

Wo jue de zhong wen kou yu hen rong yi, ke shi xie zi hen nan. Wo de dui hua peng you you shi hou hen hao you shi hou bu hao. Suo yi you shi hou wo jue de gen ta men shuo hua mei you yi si. Wo jue de na tian shi lang fei shi jian. Ke shi jin nian de han yu ke you hen duo de dui hua, suo yi wo bi yi qian shuo hen duo han yu. Wo ye jue de dui hua shi jian tai duan le, wo xiang lao shi ying gai gei wo men duo yi dian shi jian liao tian er, yin wei hen you yong.
(10/30/2007)

[Translation: I think Chinese oral is very easy, but writing is very hard. My dialogue friends sometimes very good, sometimes not good. So sometimes I feel speaking with them is not fun. I feel that day is wasting time. But this year's Chinese class has a lot of dialogues, therefore I speak a lot of Chinese compared to before. I also feel the time for dialogues is too short. The teacher should give us more time to chat because it is very useful.] (10/30/2007)

In this reflection journal, JM acknowledged the importance of doing peer interactions in the classroom by saying it 'very useful' and the students should be given 'more time to chat' during these interactive routines. However, he also pointed out that sometimes working with partners who were 'not good' made him

feel wasting time that day, so he would get impatient or become bored as sometimes shown in the data recorded during peer interactive work. He still exhibited some immature behavior during class time such as getting to class 20 minutes late with excuses that made everybody laugh or falling asleep during silent reading or writing work in class a couple of times. But JM was a very articulate student who could be very active, contributing to the conversations in Chinese beautifully, but sometimes he could also be struggling with lack of vocabulary words or grammatical knowledge to deliver what he wanted to talk in Chinese effectively. Another feature of JM in his overall approach to study was his disorganization and poor time management in preparing for classes, which was evidenced by his inability to turn in work on time or simply forgot what was required for the next class. Not as most other students who were in general very responsible for their work, JM seemed to need more constant reminders to stay on task or do the required work. It is interesting to note that JM, a capable language student who loved talking and could meet the targeted standards in several skill areas in his Chinese studies would need constant reminders to stay on tasks in class. His case speaks to the fact that other factors such as attitude, study habits, and personal beliefs on types of activities or tasks would affect the dynamic of a pair or group interaction and consequently affect learners' performance. JM's feeling of 'wasting time' by working with a partner who 'was not good' might also come from his expectation from older students to make the conversation flow nicely and fun, but his lack of sensitivity sometimes to his

partners, perhaps often unintentionally, as evidenced in a few exchanges in his interaction data, contributed to his disengagement in certain activities.

Participation in Peer Interaction and L2 Development

JM's peer interaction data show that he was able to participate effectively in peer interactive activities, but not in a consistently active manner throughout the period of the study. From a comparison of his interaction data from the beginning to the end of the study, JM's oral production seemed to become both faster in speed and more in amount, especially evidenced in his final project presentation and his oral assessment data at the end of the study. However, some usage or grammar errors corrected by peers during his peer interactive work did not seem to always get his attention, which was also evidenced in his fluent delivery of the oral assessment data. This is interesting to observe in terms of why some errors were attended and others were not for this particular learner, and if this has something to do with the activity type that the learner was involved in at the time. Unlike teacher-centered classroom activity, the learners generally have more responsibilities for their learning in pair or group work. Although JM got frustrated with his partner's language abilities at times while working with her during the project work, he admitted the benefit of interacting with the partner to solve language problems together, sometimes even if it was just a simple verification job of looking up the correct characters for a particular combination together.

Excerpt 10A below provides an example to show the role of peer collaboration in the developmental process of JM and PL completing a translation task. In this exchange, JM alone could not accomplish the task successfully, but only in collaboration with his peer PL. However, he was able to use such construction successfully in his later independent work such as the example given in excerpt 11A below. Excerpt 10A is a short portion of a translation exercise JM and PL worked together involving around concerns for grammatical accuracy. First, JM asked for assistance for a lexical item (line 92), and then made an error in word order (line 94). As JM initially put the preposition phrase 'cong qian bian de su she...' in the wrong place in the sentence, PL corrected him with a suggestion (line 95). In the next few turns, JM tried to use the 'cong...' phrase correctly in the sentence, but he was not able to do it with his first couple of attempts. However, with PL's assistance and collaboratively JM came up with the correct sentence in line 104 as he finished writing that complete translated sentence on paper.

Excerpt 10A (11/13/2007)

- 91 PL: Ni ke yi sheng qian... ah: zai shuo
You can save money... ah: in addition
- 92 JM: xin sheng de shi hou, ah: xin sheng de shi hou, ban um um
 (+) registration? Zen me shuo registration?
When new students, ah: when new students, do um um (+)
registration? How do you say 'registration'?
- 93 PL: ah, zhu ce... ban zhu ce shou xu
ah, registration... (to) do registration procedure
- 94 JM: yeah, ban zhu ce shou xu, ah:: ban zhu ce shou xu yi hou,
 ah, ah, su she de lao sheng:: bang ni ban ni de xing li um:

- um, cong qian bian de su she dao: dao: ah:: ni de xin fang jian (writing down as he was saying it)
Yeah, do registration procedure, ah:: do registration procedure, ah, ah, the old students of the dorm:: help you carry your luggage um: um, from the dorm in the front to: to: ah:: your new room (writing down as he was saying it)
- 95 PL: I think you should put the cong phrase before
I think you should put the cong phrase before
- 96 JM: at the beginning?
At the beginning?
- 97 PL: No, just before the verb
no, just before the verb
- 98 JM: Then, su she de lao sheng, ah, cong qian bian de su she dao ni de xin fang jian, um:: bang ni ban xing li
Then, the old students of the dorm, ah, from the dorm in the front to your new room, um:: help you carry luggage
- 99 PL: Mmm... it doesn't sound right, ni jue de ne?
Mmm... it doesn't sound right, what do you think?
- 100 JM: I think you put the phrase at the beginning of the sentence...
I think you put the phrase at the beginning of the sentence...
- 101 PL: Ah: no, wo men ying gai shuo: ah: bang ni cong qian bian de su she ban xing li dao::
Ah: no, we should say: ah: help you from the dorm in the front carry the luggage to::
- 102 JM: dao ni de xin fang jian?
To your new room?
- 103 PL: dui
right
- 104 JM: OK, that sounds right, ah, su she de lao sheng: bang ni cong qian bian de su she ban (ni de) xing li dao ni de xin su she, no, xin fang jian...
OK, that sounds right, ah, the old student of the dorm: help you from the dorm in the front carry (your) luggage to your new dorm, no, new room...

It is interesting to note here that although PL in general was not as fluent as JM, she seemed to be more confident in this translation exercise, knowing more vocabulary words and confidently initiating a repair of the sentence structure. The interaction itself was smooth in the sense of no misunderstanding between the two participants, but it is also obvious that PL was directing JM, maybe

unconsciously, to the correct structure in translating the sentence (lines 95, 97, 99, and 101). She used the 'teacher' role to point out the error and suggest how to repair the error in line 95, and through expressing doubts and clarifying questions, she led JM to the correct order of using the preposition phrase in the sentence. PL obviously played a more 'capable' peer role in this particular task in which she helped JM to successfully complete the sentence (shown in line 104). More importantly, JM was able to use this particular construction correctly again and again in his later independent work both orally and in writing as the example shown in excerpt 11A.

Excerpt 11A (11/27/2007)

Da wei he ta de shu shu cong yi he yuan zuo wu gui dian che qu
chang cheng, yi gong si shi wu fen zhong. Ta men dao da de shi
hou, chang cheng you tai duo de you ke.

[David and his uncle from the Summer Palace took the trolley to the Great Wall, 45 minutes altogether. When they arrived (the Great Wall), there were too many tourists.]

Excerpt 11A was from JM's narrative piece describing an American's experience in China. In the excerpt given above, he used 'cong yi he yuan zuo wu gui dian che qu chang cheng' (from the Summer Palace took the trolley to the Great Wall), which is exactly the same construction in his dialogue with PL when they worked on the translation exercise, only this time, based on the model, he expanded the usage to express other things successfully. Although only one short exchange cannot claim the learner's complete acquisition of a particular

language point, it is evident though that developmentally the collaboration process JM had with his peer PL earlier in their translation exercise helped his internalization of the structure so that he was able to use it independently with success later. This example also shows that PL as a less proficient user of the language was able to play the 'expert' role in this particular construction of the language, which is consistent with more research studies in the peer collaboration of L2 classrooms (Donato, 2004, Otha, 2001,). The excerpts given here are representative examples of many peer interactions JM was involved in during the semester that led to his second language learning and development. The finding of studying JM's interactions with his peers reveals that collaborative efforts among peers, whether their proficiency levels are the same or different, benefit learners' L2 development in the acquisition of vocabulary, syntax, and cultural knowledge of the target language.

JM's assessment data show an interesting picture of his mixed abilities in language skills. His final oral project presentation was very well done, speaking beautifully on the topic of his choice, while his partner XL struggled to deliver with moderate fluency. Based on the sample indicators of ACTFL Chinese standards, JM was able to present information integrating a variety of concepts and ideas clearly at the more advanced intermediate level, which showed his fine mastery of several skills in the presentational mode of the target language. However, the typed written project had careless typos and more unfixed grammatical errors, which was consistent with his overall approach to written work. It is also

evidenced from his self reflection journal statement on his dislike of writing in Chinese. It is interesting to note that JM could act as an expert in language problem-solving activities when he was engaged but could also act as a distracter when he was not into the conversations. However, his increased dialogic engagement became evident as he learned from others in their approaches and attitudes towards the interactive routines in the classroom. His increased engagement can be traced to a number of episodes exhibited by his pair work and in open conversations. JM's OPIs showed strong improvement in his oral proficiency level that will be reported in the next section. Some of JM's classroom behavior may also suggest that some conversation topics might have not the best to suit his developmental stage in his overall growth as a learner and an adolescent.

Narrative 5: MD

Personal History Interview Recap and Self Reflection on CFL Learning

MD, a senior, was an international student from Honduras. MD grew up with speaking Spanish and English, a bilingual speaker, in Honduras, where his family was in a very rich neighborhood. According to MD, he attended school with kids from very rich families who seemed to concern about money all the time, so he didn't like it there very much. He came to the boarding school as a 9th grader who chose Chinese to take as his language requirement because it simply sounded cool to him. Prior to coming here, he also took Italian because his

stepfather was an Italian who took him to Italy in the summer. MD had never been to China prior to the beginning of the study, but by the time the first interview conducted, he already knew he was going to China for a five-week study and travel program the following summer and he was very excited about it. MD considered himself active in class and comfortable with the interactive routines of the class format. His biggest challenge was to retain what he learned in class. According to him, the lack of language environment after school made it very hard to retain the knowledge learned in class and he always wanted to go to China and experience the language first hand. Here MD revealed his perspective on L2 learning in which social environment and social interaction with native speakers are important for L2 acquisition. This is consistent with sociocultural theory which is about second language learning as a developmental process mediated by a variety of semiotic resources, including classroom peer interactions, socially-mediated learning activities as well as the physical environment. In terms of cultural knowledge, MD felt that he knew very little about Chinese culture – the limited knowledge he had learned came mostly from taking Chinese and doing cultural projects or attending cultural events at the school such as the Chinese Lunar New Year celebration in his previous years of attending the school. MD's family was supportive of his choice of learning Chinese and they all encouraged him to become fluent so that one day the whole family would go to visit China with him as an interpreter.

In regards to peer interactions, MD wrote in his reflection journal,

Wo hen xi huan zhong wen ke de shi wu fen zhong de dui hua shi jian. Wo de tong xue he wo ke neng (yi) tao lun mei tian de huo dong. Sui ran wo you shi hou nu li, you shi hou xiang fang qi, wo jue de zhe ge dui hua shi fei chang hao, you yong de lian xi. Wo de tong xue men hen hao di shuo zhong wen, suo yi ta men ke neng bang wo. Wo hai jue de wo men yi tian ying gai fu xi hen duo de lao ci. Wo wang le tai duo de zhong wen biao da shi, wo dei fu xi zhe xie biao da shi. (10/30/2007)

[Translation: *I like the 15 minute Chinese conversation time. My classmates and I can (ke yi NOT ke neng) discuss our daily activities. Although I sometimes try hard, sometimes want to give up, I feel this conversation is very good, useful exercise. My classmates speak well, therefore they can help me. I also feel that we should every day review old words. I forgot too many Chinese expressions, I have to review these expressions.] (10/30/2007)*

In this excerpt we can see that MD took the conversation time seriously. Although he admitted the challenges of talking in Chinese for these conversations at times, he felt it was a good practice format to learn the language. He seemed to respect his peers with regards to their speaking abilities, and was confident in getting assistance from them during the peer interaction time. His language reflection journals further confirmed that MD treated communicative peer learning activities seriously.

Vygotskian sociocultural theory provides a useful framework for explaining why learners such as MD use positive learning strategies to engage in peer interactive activities in the L2 classrooms. The perception and his personal learning history MD's data revealed suggest his goal in using a given language learning strategy towards his Chinese studies when interacting with others. His

positive summer experience in learning Italian in the target language country affected the way he viewed language environment and social interaction.

Participation in Peer Interaction and L2 Development

MD's classroom peer interaction data indicated several areas of his L2 development. When in whole group discussion, MD seemed to be talking less than when he worked with one or two partners, but he seemed to be paying conscious attention to what his peers had to say in these bigger group talks. Conscious attention and notice are believed to be an important part of language learning processes, especially when learners notice and act on their peers' malformed utterances (Ohta, 2001). In MD's case, even if he didn't often act upon his peers' error utterances at first, he noted those errors and later asked the teacher or peers questions to verify the correct use of those utterances when he tried to use the language with similar structures or usage later. This was reflected not only in his later oral productions but also in his written work, which provided evidence of his learning strategies used to build on his vocabulary and grammatical use of the language through conscious noticing. He noted that he often had something to say, but needed more processing time so he often missed the chance to speak up before others jumped in. MD seemed to be very conscious about producing correct utterances during peer interactions, so sometimes it limited his opportunities to put out what he had to say during such interaction time. However, he constantly asked for assistance if he did not understand something, especially in pair work or smaller group interactions.

Excerpts 7, 9, and 10 in the previous section are just a few, but representative examples that show MD did often ask for assistance or clarify what he did not understand in peer interactions. This active learning strategy again speaks to his belief on learning a second language, which values social interaction and collaboration with peers.

In pair or triad work, MD took a much more active role to negotiate meaning with his partners. He, with two other students JT and XL, worked very nicely together for an end-lesson skit. During their interaction time, MD often suggested ideas and pushed to execute those ideas effectively. At the same time, JT and XL helped him with language use, especially form related assistance, during their problem-solving interactions. In the documented interactions among the three learners, there were many instances of scaffolded help in which MD initiated questions a number of times in order to solve linguistic problems. Some of the co-constructed bits of linguistic knowledge were later used in independent performance by MD and two other learners when assistance was not available anymore. Excerpt 12A provides a glimpse into their interactive work of making up a skit on travel.

Excerpt 12A (10/23/2007)

- 105 MD: Mmmm... na::
Mmmm... na::
- 106 JT: You shen me wen ti ma?
(do you) have questions?
- 107 MD: Wo ah:: zhe ge zi zhe ge, businesss class? Zen me xie?
I ah:: this word this, business class? How to write?

- 108 JT: gong wu cang? Gong wu cang: gong wu cang: (writing it down)
business class? Business class: business class: (writing it down)
- 109 MD: Wo yao shuo: ni da suan mai pu tong cang hai shi gong wu cang?
I will say: do you plan to buy ordinary class or business class?
- 110 JT: dui, wo shuo gong wu cang tai gui, wo men mai pu tong cang
right, I say business class is too expensive, we buy ordinary class
- 111 XL: yi hou jiu yao yao, bu ke yi you liquid, so: lotion, toothpaste...
911 after, (you) may not have liquid, so lotion, toothpaste... ((English))
- 112 MD: ya gao
toothpaste
- 113 JT: liquid shi:: ye ti, wo men ye ke yi shuo he de dong xi
liquid is:: liquid, we may also say things to drink
- 114 MD: he de dong xi? Na wo men bu neng he lotion (hhh) lotion zen me shuo?
Things to drink? Then we cannot drink lotion (hhh) how to say lotion?
- 115 JT: Mmm: (++)
Mmm: (++)
- 116 XL: wait! Wo you zi dian (looking up the dictionary)
wait! I have dictionary (looking up the dictionary)
- 117 MD: zuo fei ji bu ke yi dai he de dong xi he ah:: lotion?
Taking an airplane (you) may not bring things to drink ah:: lotion?
- 118 XL: Here it is mmm... lotion shi xi mian ye
Here it is mmm... lotion ((English)) is lotion ((Chinese))
- 119 MD: xi mian ye, xi mian ye (writing it down) ni ke yi shuo zuo fei ji bu ke yi dai he de dong xi he xi mian ye
lotion, lotion (writing it down) you can say taking an airplane you may not bring things to drink and lotion
- 120 JT: hao, I'll say zhuang dong xi de shi hou, bie fang (+) xi mian ye? Gen he de dong xi
ok, I'll say when you pack, do not put (+) lotion? And things to drink
- 121 XL: ni mai piao, I'll say yi hou jiu yao yao, ni bu ke yi...
you buy tickets, I'll say 911 after, you may not...
- 122 JT: jiu yao yao yi hou, yi hou after jiu yao yao
after 911, after should go after 911

- 123 XL: Oh, OK, jiu yao yao yi hou, ni bu ke yi dai he de dong xi he::
xi: mian ye
*oh, OK, after 911, you may not bring things to drink and::
lo:tion*
- 124 MD: oh, here, kuai kuai, shou piao chu guan men wo men shuo
lai bu ji, ni yao tao lun tao lun, tao lun hui
lai yi hou, oh, hui lai yi hou tao lun
*oh, here, quickly quickly, the ticket place (will) close we talk
with no time left, (if) you want to discuss, discuss after
coming back (incorrect word order), oh, after coming back,
(we) discuss (correct)*
- 125 JT: hen hao, oh, wait, ni zai shuo yi bian, lai bu ji? That
sentence?
*Very good, oh, wait, say it one more time, with no time left?
That
sentence?*
- 126 MD: wo men shuo lai bu ji?
We talk with no time left? (incorrect word order)
- 127 JT: I think lai bu ji goes before the verb
I think 'with no time left' goes before the verb
- 128 MD: lai bu ji shuo?
With no time left to talk? (correct word order)
- 129 JT: yeah, lai bu ji shuo le
*yeah, with no time left to talk (le) ((the particle 'le' is needed
here))*
- 130 MD: wo men lai bu ji shuo? Lai bu ji shuo LE?
We with no time left to talk? With no time left (with le)?
- 131 JT: yeah
yeah

In excerpt 12A, there were several instances of assisted performance among the three participants. MD was trying to write the word 'gong wu cang, and obviously had trouble. First, after JT's inquiry, MD asked for assistance on how to write the expression, and then he continued to compose his sentence orally. When XL spoke in line 111 with an error in syntax and a quest for a lexical item, nobody in the group seemed to know the word 'lotion', but with the dictionary at hand, they solved the word problem right away, using dictionary as a

mediating tool. Then XL's error of using the preposition 'yi hou' (after) the English way was pointed out by JT and then she corrected the phrase by moving the preposition to the end of the phrase. Another syntax error made by MD was also pointed out by JT, and step by step led by JT through turns 125 to 130 MD corrected the error successfully. It is interesting to note that here JT was obviously the 'expert' who spotted both errors, one made by XL and one made by MD in their attempt to talk. She acted almost like a teacher who pointed out the errors and led her peers to the correct use of both sentences. In this dialogue, the focus seemed to be the language use, however, meaning of the skit was negotiated at the same time through collaboration. At first glance, it seems that JT was dominating the dialogue by playing the 'expert' role, but the interaction also clearly suggests the mutually constructed communication in the appropriation of their linguistic knowledge. This type of interaction and collaboration seems to provide simple opportunities for learners to exchange linguistic artifacts to the acquisition of the target language. MD and his peers obviously benefited from one another's input and feedback throughout the interaction.

Excerpt 13A below provides two segments of a skit they presented the following class that is correspondent to the piece they were working on earlier as shown in excerpt 12A. The errors got corrected by JT became finalized in their delivery with correct use of both linguistic errors MD and XL made earlier. This example provides evidence of learners' L2 development from collaborative

dialogues to knowledge building. After the collaboration with one another through scaffolding and co-construction, the three learners produced a more 'polished' interaction with more effective language use than they could do previously. Although the shared knowledge of using the particular structures in one prepared skit cannot provide a full picture of the learners' developmental level, it certainly shows the effects of knowledge building process in learners' performance in the target language. As Swain argues,

As each participant speaks, their 'saying' becomes 'what they said', providing an object for reflection. Their 'saying' is cognitive activity, and 'what is said' is an outcome of that activity. Through saying and reflecting on what is said, new knowledge is constructed. (Swain 2000: 113)

Excerpt 13A below shows such an outcome of the collaborative dialogues through three learners' interaction in the classroom setting. The dialogues function as a socially constructed cognitive tool which serves second language learning by mediating its own construction of knowledge building.

Excerpt 13A (10/26/2007)

(at home with MD and JT as a couple in the skit)

- 131 MD: ni da suan mai pu tong cang hai shi gong wu cang?
Do you plan to buy ordinary class or business class?
- 132 JT: wo men mai putong cang ba, yin wei gong wu cang tai gui
Let's buy ordinary class, because business class is too expensive
- 133 MD: hao, wo qu shou piao chu, ni ke yi zhuang xiang zi
ok, I go to the ticket place, you can pack the suitcase
- 134 JT: wo de xiang zi hen xiao. Wo ke yi zhuang wo de yi fu, ke shi bie de dong xi zhuang bu xia

- my suitcase is very small. I can pack my clothes, but there is no room for other things*
- 135 MD: shen me dong xi? Wo ke yi dou gei ni, bi ru ya shua, ya gao, xiang zao, hai you he de dong xi he:: xi mian ye.
What things? I can give you, such as tooth brush, toothpaste, soap, also things to drink, and:: lotion.
- 136 JT: he de dong xi wo ke yi fang zai shou ti bao li mian
things to drink I can put in my carry-on bag
- 137 MD: bu ke yi, jiu yao yao yi hou bu xu zai fei ji li dai na ge dong xi. Shi xin de shou xu ((should be 'gui ding' – wrong word choice))
not ok, after 911 (it) not allowed to take those thing onto the plane. Is new procedure ((should be 'rule/regulation' – wrong word choice))
- 138 JT: eh, wo ming bai. Ni yao wo bang ni zhuang ni de xiang zi ma? Ni yao zhuang shen me dong xi ya?
Eh, I understand. Do you want me to help you pack your suitcase? What do you want me to pack?
- 139 MD: bu, wo dei li kai. Wo men ying gai yi hou tao lun. Shou piao chu yao guan men, xian zai lai bu ji shuo le, zhai jian.
No, I have to leave. We should discuss later. The ticket place will close, now I have no time to talk, goodbye.
- 140 JT: oh, kuai qu kuai qu.
Oh, quickly go quickly go.

(at the ticket counter following the last dialogue)

- 141 XL: ni yao mai shen me piao? Ni qu nar?
What ticket do you want to buy? Where are you going?
- 142 MD: wo yao mai qu bei jing de lai hui piao.
I want to buy a round-trip ticket to Beijing.
- 143 XL: ni yao mai gong wu cang ma?
Do you want to buy business class?
- 144 MD: bu yao, gong wu cang tai gui, wo yao mai pu tong cang de piao.
No, business class is too expensive, I want to buy ordinary class ticket.
- 145 XL: ni yao ji yue ji hao qi fei?
What date's ticket do you want?
- 146 MD: qi yue er shi yi hao you piao ma?
July 21 do you still have tickets?
- 146 XL: fei chang hao, ni yao ji zhang piao?
Very good, how many tickets do you want?

- 147 MD: wo yao liang zhang, wo de tai tai ye yao mai piao.
I want two, my wife has to buy ticket, too.
- 148 XL: qing gei kan ni de hu zhao, uh, uh, hai you gong zuo zheng
please show me your passport, uh, uh, also your work ID
- 149 MD: zhe shi hu zhao, zhe shi gong zuo zheng
this is passport, this is work ID
- 150 XL: xie xie. Gei ni piao.
Thanks, here your tickets
- 151 MD: xie xie. Oh, wo ke yi dai yi ge da shou ti bao shang fei ji ma?
Thanks. Oh, may I bring a big handbag to get on plane?
- 152 XL: bu, bu ke yi hen da, xiao, uh, xiao de shou ti bao
no, not too big, small, uh, small handbag
- 153 MD: ke shi, ke shi wo you hen duo de ri yong pin
but, but I have many necessities
- 154 XL: shen me ri yong pin? Jiu yao yao yi hou, ni bu ke yi dai:: dai::
xi mian ye he shui, he he de dong xi.
*What necessities? After 911, you may not bring:: bring::
lotion and water, and things to drink.*
- 155 MD: hao, duo shao qian?
Ok, how much money?
- 156 XL: liang qian yi bai san shi jiu kuai
two thousand one hundred and thirty-nine dollars
- 157 MD: hao. Fei chang gui. Hao de, xie xie.
Good. Very expensive. OK, thanks.
- 158 XL: xie xie. Zai jian.
Thanks. Goodbye.

Such activity shown in excerpt 13A is a product of peer interaction among three learners. MD, as the other two learners, in these conversations was able to engage and scaffold one another's performance. The knowledge transfer was evident from incorrect linguistic knowledge to correct knowledge, which is in agreement with the sociocultural perspective in development. Activity theory acknowledges learners as social beings, and their ability to use language emerges from their social interactions. The way MD learned Chinese is not necessarily the same as his peers who may be more visible in bigger group peer

interactive routines. However, his language development was manifested through these processes of peer interactive routines, resulting in his better performance in language use both orally and in writing in the target language. As Ohta (2001) pointed out, L2 process involved transformative interactions that may be different for each learner in each social setting, and that result in products that may look similar on the surface, but may be produced variable paths in different learners.

MD had a clear goal for developing his language skills in Chinese because he was able to connect his current study to his future – intending to ‘learn more about Chinese art history and architecture’ in the future. He was able to make connections between his love for architecture and his Chinese studies by the possibility of using Chinese to study eastern styles of architecture such as the Chinese art history and ancient architecture, which was an inspiration to his efforts of learning the language. MD’s overall data indicated that he achieved greater understanding of the language with regards to its linguistic forms and cultural concepts in his use of Chinese both in his oral assessments and in his written work.

Narrative 6: PL

Personal History Interview Recap

PL was a female American student, a senior and a prefect (student leader) in the dorm. Prior to coming to the school, PL took Spanish for three years and her dad and grandma used to speak French with her when she was very young

before her dad passed away. Upon arriving to the new school, she took both Spanish and Chinese the first year, and dropped Spanish the 2nd year, due to the workload. PL said she loved Chinese medicine. Initially she wanted to major in international relations in college, but later during the course of the study she also said she wanted to become a pediatrician. PL's mother was an African American educator who taught in an elementary school in the New York City. She was extremely supportive of PL's language learning efforts. During PL's 3-week spring breaks, her mother always asked her to teach her 5th and 6th graders a little Chinese or do mini presentations on Chinese culture. PL also went on the five-week study and travel program in China with the current school summer program after her first year of Chinese, in which she had a great time and loved the experience. In terms of her classroom experience with Chinese, she said she enjoyed all the opportunities of talking in Chinese in class including all the interactions with peers and the teacher because those helped her the most in terms of integrating the vocabulary words and idiomatic expressions into the talks. For the same reason, PL always made an extra effort to talk in Chinese with a couple of students from Hong Kong or Taiwan in her dorm, which helped her reinforce the knowledge learned in class, especially the words and grammar. PL felt that her knowledge of Chinese culture came mostly from her first hand experience of visiting China and class work such as cultural projects, Chinese movies, and class discussions. A very talented ballet dancer and a warm-hearted student leader in the dorm, PL also had a passion for language learning. Her

personal history provides a picture of her early exposure to foreign languages – French and Spanish – and then her clear goal of studying International relations in college and Chinese medicine became her driving force behind her ability to draw on what she knew and continue to build on it, which is an effective way to learn a foreign language.

Perspective towards CFL learning and Participation in Peer Interaction

PL's peer interaction data provided a consistent picture in which a learner's agency and cultural history all situated in a clearly goal-oriented activity framework. Her peer interaction data reveal clearly that she was a very active participant in class. Based on her narratives in personal history interview, and class observations, it is clear that PL's belief and positive learning experiences all contributed to her active interactive learning style in the CFL classroom. PL considered herself active in oral participation because she believed that practice, especially the 'to-do-yourself' learning activities that resembled real life situations such as the role-plays were very beneficial to her second language development as evidenced in her reflection journal writing:

Wo xi huan zuo hen duo de dui hua, xiang wo men ke yi qu zhong guo can guan, zhong guo shang dian he shi chang, deng deng. Zuo role-plays (English) hen you yong. Wo jue de xiang de shi hou zen me shuo he zen mo zuo hui zhen (de) bang zhu wo men zai jiang lai. (10/30/2007)

[Translation: I like doing a lot of dialogues, like we can go to a Chinese restaurant, Chinese store and markets, etc. Do role-plays is very useful. I think when thinking (about) how to say and how to do would really help us in the future (use of the language).]
(10/30/2007)

When responding to the email request on peer interactive work, she wrote,

I like the fact that I can practice my conversation skills without feeling too self-consciousness because my peers are on the same level as I am. When working with my peers we often correct each other's errors in using the language. After class I try and have a few minute conversation with someone to keep up and work on what I have learned in class that day. For peer feedback, I like the constructive type, not attacking feedback. Because if a student says you are wrong all the time then you will most likely stop speaking up and less likely able to practice and fix those errors in speaking.
(12/4/2007)

When followed up with her about peer feedback in interactive activities in class, PL said most of her peers were very strategic and constructive in pointing out each other's errors, but there were a couple of times when she was working with JM she felt a little bit uncomfortable because of his insensitive remarks. The following short exchange between PL and JM provides an example on what she meant in terms of the feedback she got on error corrections or asking for assistance from JM:

Excerpt 14A (10/12/2007)

- 159 PL: Ni zuo tian wan shang cai fang shei le?
Who did you interview last night?
- 160 JM: Michael Wong, zai wo de su she.
Michael Wong, in my dorm.
- 161 PL: Ta shi shen me? Cantonese? Oh, zen me shuo Cantonese?
He is what? Cantonese? Oh, how do you say 'Cantonese' (in Chinese)?
- 162 JM: Hey, we learned that in Chinese !!
Hey, we learned that in Chinese !!
- 163 PL: Well, wo wang le... dui bu qi!
Well, I forgot... sorry!
- 164 JM: Guang dong ren! Shei dou zhi dao!
Cantonese! Everyone knows!

JM in this short exchange showed his negative attitude in interacting with PL, impatient and sarcastic. Despite the fact that PL was a senior, JM was a more fluent and competent speaker due to his strong background in the language but he sometimes exhibited immature behavior in the classroom such as illustrated in this example and discussed above in the section of reporting his data.

For PL, the activities such as open conversations and role-plays were meaningful in terms of learning the language because she knew what she wanted from learning Chinese in connection to her future. However, from the perspective of activity theory, this was not necessarily the case for all other students in the CFL classroom. Both XB and JM discussed above are different examples compared to PL.

To show more specifically PL's development in using CFL, excerpts 15A and 16A are representative examples that illustrate PL's change in performance from the time earlier in the study to the time at the end of the study. Excerpt 15A shows that PL had little control over the aspect 'le' to indicate past tense in her written retell of a story from the textbook, but two months later, shown in excerpt 16A, she retold another Chinese history story from a series of pictures, and demonstrated a much better controlled use of the aspect in her performance. In excerpt 15A, there are several places that the problematic use of the aspect 'le' and a couple of other errors. First, in the 1st line 'le' should be used right after the verb 'kan', but it was missing. Then, in the 4th line, PL overused 'le' twice, and in

three other places indicated in parenthesis when it is not needed, and she also made errors such as using English syntax to write a Chinese sentence as indicated in the parenthesis. This example shows that PL did not have much control over the correct use of the aspect particle 'le' in her language use in the context. Without clear use of the particle 'le', the time of 'action' can be confusing to listeners or readers. 'le' is one of the most difficult grammatical features in the Chinese language because it serves a variety of functions and may appear either after a verb or at the end of the sentence (Cheung, 1994). Here in this excerpt, 'le' is used to indicate past or perfective aspect, which is also the most frequently used function. Within the usage, there are several 'rules' that restrict the use of 'le' with certain words but not others. PL's reasoning in using the rules was obviously inconsistent although she learned the rules from previous lessons and used it in peer interactions. Her 'story' shows her general understanding of the 'aspect' of using 'le', but she overused it in places that it was not needed. However, two months later, PL produced a much more coherent use of the aspect particle 'le' in retelling a history story as illustrated in excerpt 16A.

Excerpt 15A (10/5/2007)

... Da ming wen lin da kan tong zhi ma (there should be a 'le' right after the verb 'kan', but missing here). Ta shuo shen me tong zhi. Xia ge xing qi xue xiao zu zhi chun you ta xiang lin da yao shi xiang can jia (error in usage 'yao shi' – English version)..... lin da bu zhi dao le xue xiao you le chun you (overuse of 'le' in this sentence), suo yi ta wen qu le shen me di fang, lin da yi zhi dou xiang le ('le' not needed here) qu chang cheng. Ta wen le da ming zen me qu le (overuse of the 'le' again), da ming shuo le mei ge ren wu shi yuan jiao le ('le' not needed here) xue xiao bang gong shi..."

[Translation: ... *Da Ming asked Linda if she sees the notice. She said what notice. Next week school organizes a spring outing he wants to know (if) Linda wants to join... Linda did not know the spring outing, so she ask went what place. Linda had been wanting to go to Chang Cheng. She asked Da Ming how to went. Da Ming said every person turns in 50 yuan (to) the school office...]*

Excerpt 16A (12/6/2007)

... meng jiang nu de gu shi shi hen jiu hen jiu yi qian. Meng jiang nu ren shi le yi ge ren, liang tian hou ta men jie hun le. Ta de xin zhang fu dei qu xiu zhu chang cheng. Ta zou le yi hou ban nian mei hui lai jia, suo yi meng jiang nu qu zhao ta le. ke shi ta qu na er de shi hou, ta zhao bu dao ta le. Ta zai chang cheng xia ku (missing 'le' here) hen duo de tian, zhe shi yi duan chang cheng tu ran bei ta ku dao le, lou chu le ta zhang fu de shi ti. Meng jiang nu hen bei shang, ta hou lai zi sha le.

[Translation: ... *the story of meng jiang nu was a long long time ago. Meng jiang nu got to know a man, two days later they got married. Her new husband had to go to build the Great Wall. After he left, for half a year he did not return, so meng jiang nu went to look for him..... but when she got there, she could not find him. She cry (missing 'le' here) at the foot of the Great Wall for many days, then suddenly a chunk of the wall fell to the ground by her cry, her husband's body was exposed. Meng Jiang nu was very sad, (and) she later committed suicide.]*

In excerpt 16A, PL used 'le' correctly most of the time as she displayed a consistent and coherent use of the past aspect 'le' to tell the events in the story. This greatly improved performance in one particular aspect of the language use shows that PL over time developed the ability of using the past/perfect aspect 'le' more effectively. As shown in this representative example of PL's language learning and development, PL's data reveal similar instances in peer interactive

work when her 'le' or other uses of the language got corrected or modified through her 'talk-in-action' with other students in the CFL classroom.

PL's example shows what ultimately mattered to her in this learning process because it was 'the activity and significance that shape the individual's orientation to learn or not' (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001, p. 148). PL's data reveal that she utilized appropriate assistance either in error corrections from peers or directly interacting with others throughout the study. The practical tips and corrected forms of vocabulary and grammar from peers consistently appeared in her oral assessment data and her written work, which PL clearly benefited from the opportunities that the peer interactive tasks provided to build on her growing knowledge of the Chinese language.

Narrative 7: XL

Personal History Interview Recap

XL is another female American student, also a senior, who loved sports and science. Prior to coming to the school, XL took eight years of Spanish, and got tired of doing the same language, so when she came here, she randomly selected Chinese for her foreign language requirement for a change. She said she had never been good at languages due to her speech impairment issue, so talking including tones and pronunciation and grammar were especially hard for her. However, she always tried her best, so her grades were satisfactory with an average of B range scores. Despite of all the challenges, XL said that she would

definitely continue her Chinese studies in college, although she was not sure yet what major she would get into at the time of her interview. According to XL, her family had no interest in Chinese or Chinese culture, but they were cool about her choice of learning the language. Her mother wanted her to continue Spanish first, but respected her own decision to take Chinese. In terms of her class participation, XL considered herself an active participant who tried to speak a lot in class, even if it might not help the class due to her poor ability in speaking Chinese. XL's cultural knowledge about Chinese language and culture mostly came from class materials or watching Chinese movies, but she said she realized that there were a lot more layers to the Chinese culture that she didn't know.

Perspective towards CFL learning and Participation in Peer Interaction

XL's data show her consistent efforts in improving her language skills, especially in her oral production, which she considered as her weakness in her overall skill areas of learning Chinese. This study didn't examine in detail the general pronunciation and the four tones of Chinese sounds in the seven learners, but XL's struggle with the sounds, especially the four tones were much more obvious than the rest of the participants in her production of the conversations in the data. However, her oral fluency and confidence from the beginning to the end of the study showed a steady progress. Her final project presentation, although still struggled with her accent and overall fluency, was delivered in a much more satisfactory manner than her earlier oral assessment

and conversational data in the study. Oral output as previous research showed is central for L2 acquisition. It is difficult to investigate the complex interdependencies of many different factors between the learner's linguistic competence and his or her performance without substantial speech production and an effective methodology. This study examined the learners' overall language development such as general proficiency level changes both linguistic and cultural as evidenced from peer interactions, but it didn't seek detailed analysis of the phonetic sounds produced by each learner. XL's data revealed her particular characteristics in terms of her struggles with sounds as evidenced in the misunderstanding from her peers in oral communication shown in this representative example below:

- XL: Ni yao xiu xi ma?
Are you going to rest (xiu xi)?
- PL: Wei shen me?
Why?
- XL: Ming tian, uh... ming tian wo men you kao shi, shi bu shi?
Tomorrow, uh... tomorrow we have a test, isn't it?
- PL: kao shi? Wei shen me xiu xi? OH, xue xi? Ni shuo 'XUE XI'...
Test? Why rest? OH, study? Ni said 'STUDY'...
- XL: I meant xiao xi, xiu xi, to study.
I meant xiao xi, xiu xi (still not accurate), to study.

In Chinese pronunciation, 'xiu xi 休息' (rest) and 'xue xi 学习' (study) have very similar sounds, especially the second syllable 'xi' – the same sound but two different characters ('息' and '习') with two different tones in the two combinations, so it would cause confusion or misunderstanding. Many times the context of the dialogues would help verify what XL really meant by saying certain

things, but sometimes it caused confusion in communication because of the mispronounced words or incorrect tones if without clear reference of the context. This is generally typical of L2 learners of Chinese as shown in an earlier excerpt in the first section of this chapter when MD gave the similar wrong pronunciation to JT who figured it out from the context right away and corrected it within the short exchange. However, XL's data revealed more than others in her struggles with the Chinese sound system. Learners' oral production in mispronunciation or tones that cause communication problems in Chinese may be pursued and studied in more detail in a separate study in the future.

Due to XL's speech impairment as a child, she said learning any languages including her mother tongue English has been a challenging experience for her at school. It also created her low self-esteem when it came to language study, especially speaking. However, XL was always in good spirit in class, always cheerful, never shy to try and speak up, because she believed that interaction in the L2 would help her learn better and retain her learned knowledge more effectively. As she wrote in response to the peer interaction questions,

I like to interact with peers because we talk about things that are not covered in the text which is nice because it shows us the real-life uses of our vocabulary. It also forces us to try to expand our vocab by listening to each other and trying to express our individual opinion. I do not correct other's errors because I can never find them, but people correct me and it is very helpful! Yes I do try to incorporate the things, both vocab and grammar related, that I learn through free conversation in other areas or aspects of my Chinese study. I find this the most productive area of the speaking exercises, because most of my weakness are highlighted when I speak, and they are most readily and constructively corrected during our free conversation. (Email response, 12/2/2007)

In this excerpt, XL expressed her view on learning Chinese through peer interaction, emphasizing the importance of its 'real-life' meaning of using vocabulary and expressing one's individual opinions during these interactions. But she also revealed her lack of confidence in ever finding other's errors during these peer interactive work. This was evidenced by the very small number of her in the category of error correction in the data chart summarized earlier in this chapter. However, XL acknowledged the benefit of being corrected by others for improving her oral Chinese and considered the error corrections as 'constructive' during their free talk. This view on peer learning had a positive effect on her L2 development because she was able to demonstrate her language skills much more effectively in her later assessment data both in spoken and written Chinese. Taken into the consideration of her personal view on peer interactions as evidenced in her reflection journal as well as informal interviews, XL's class interaction data showed the correlation between her approach to work in the peer interactive work and her achieved Chinese proficiency, all shown in her overall performance during the final integrated assessments in oral and written regarding her learning progress.

Another feature of XL's data is worth noting. Her final oral proficiency interview (OPI) did not show very obvious improvement in control of her language use. Although she was rated from Novice High to Intermediate Low, her performance barely met the criteria of the Intermediate Low rating. This contradicts her overall peer interaction data that showed more improvement in

her speaking ability as shown in some of the earlier peer interaction examples in this chapter. The OPI data is discussed in the next section.

Evidence of L2 development from comparison of two OPIs

As introduced in chapter three and earlier in this chapter, two OPIs with the seven participants were conducted, one at the beginning of the study and one at the end of the study in order to gather a pre- and post-test corpus of oral data based on the ACTFL proficiency guidelines to identify any change in L2 development with each participant over time. Based on the transcribed recorded interactions of the students with the researcher from both sets of the interviews, and on the assumption that peer interactions promote L2 development in a classroom context, the researcher used the ACTFL OPI tool to rate the general oral proficiency level of each participant to provide another source of empirical evidence to show the learner's L2 development over the period of the investigation.

ACTFL OPI is an assessment strategy for students' oral proficiency in the targeted foreign language in which an interviewer (an instructor or a researcher) can interact with students in an interview format to rate the students of a scale from the ten proficiency levels (Novice including Novice High, Novice Mid, and Novice Low, Intermediate including Intermediate High, Intermediate Mid, and Intermediate Low, and Advanced including Advanced High, Advanced Mid, and Advanced Low, plus Superior). It is a standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional language ability. It measures spoken language

production holistically by determining patterns of strengths and weaknesses and establishes a candidate's level of consistent functional ability as well as the clear upper limitations of that ability (1999). The interview usually lasts 20-25 minutes approximately of either face-to-face interaction or via the telephone and must contain the following parts:

- Warm-Up (designed to relax the student for psychological purposes)
- Level Check (designed to determine the proficiency level – Novice, Intermediate, etc.)
- Probe (designed to see if the student can perform at a higher proficiency level)
- Role-Play (designed to provide a short context for interactive language use)
- Wind-Down (designed to relax the student at the end of the interview)

A ratable sample is elicited from the participant (interviewee) through a series of personalized questions that follow established ACTFL protocol of warm-up, repeated level checks and probes, and wind down as listed above. The speech sample is then compared to the criteria for the proficiency levels and a rating is assigned.

For this study, the interview questions can be found in the Appendix (E). The list included a warm-up (question 1), personal narration in the present or past tense (question 2, 3, and 9), description of a process (question 7), role-play interaction (question 4 and 8), comparison and support of opinion (question 5 and 6), and a wrap-up (question 10). The questions were used as a guide to

probe the participant's language abilities in different functions but they were modified throughout the individual interviews depending on the conversation flow. The second set of interviews did not use a pre-set series of questions, but based on the first set of questions, the interviewer modified the questions and thus made the interviews more responsive to the language proficiencies displayed by the participants. Since the interviews were not graded for their performance, the participants were in general more relaxed during these interviews compared to their graded oral assessments for the course. The interviews were rated by the researcher using the rating criteria from the 1999 ACTFL Oral Proficiency Guidelines - Speaking. In accordance to the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Guideline, each participant received a single holistic score. However, to illustrate how these criteria were applied to the data, and how a comparison was done, an example (Sample 1) of more detailed analysis from a single response a participant did at the beginning of the study, and an example (Sample 2) from a similar question response from the same participant at the end of the study are provided here. In Sample 1, the participant (interviewee) was responding to question 4, in which the participant was instructed to make a phone call and leave a message on a friend's answer machine to apologize and explain the situation.

Sample 1 (at the beginning of the study)

Ni hao, Xiao Wang, ah.. um ... wo jin tian yige da dian hua gei ni
um ... gao su ni ... um... ah...bu hao de news. Zhe ge zhou mo ah
... wo bu neng qu kan dian ying le gen ni. Ah... ah... yin wei... yin
wei ... wo de jie jie lai kan wo, suo yi wo yao gen ta yi qi... Ah...
and ta kan le dian ying, um ... suo yi wo bu neng myself, myself,

um...um... zi ji ... um... zi ji ... qu gen ni. Dui bu qi, Xiao wang. Wo xia ge xing qi yi ge um... um ... da dian hua gei ni. Zai jian.

Hello, Little Wang, ah.. um... I today am calling you ... to tell you a bad (news). This weekend, ah... I can not go to (the) movie with you. Ah ... ah... because... because my sister comes to see me, therefore I will with her... ah... (and) she saw (that) movie, um... so I can not (myself), (myself), um... um... myself... um... myself go with you. Sorry, Little Wang. I next week a call to you. Goodbye.

Evaluation

Global task or function:

The task for leaving a message on the answer machine was carried out successfully, and the student provided enough information to explain the situation and made appropriate apology.

Language Fluency and Accuracy:

The language use indicated constant hesitation by 'ah, um' and pauses which was quite slower than a regular native speaker. The speaker also inserted quite a few English words, such as 'and, news, myself' with code-switching and self correction. The pronunciation was clear, but with several wrong tones, which would not cause misunderstanding with the establishment of the context. There were also errors in syntactical structures of a few sentences – mainly with English sentence order such as 'Wo bu neng qu kan dian ying gen ni' (I cannot go to watch movie with you) instead of using the correct structure of putting the

phrase of 'with you (gen ni) before the main verb in Chinese 'Wo bu neng gen ni qu kan dian ying'.

Content and Text Type:

The content was appropriate to the task. The paragraph-length text was organized according to the conventions of informal and casual Chinese that fit into the socially accepted norm of making apologies in such context.

Summary and Overall Assessment:

The speaker appropriately addressed the friend by the general norm of greeting and using the friend's last name after the word 'xiao', the informal second person in phone calls, and offered sufficient apology in the proper register. The student displayed the linguistic flexibility necessary to deal with the casual setting over phone conversation successfully. However, the dominant language was evident as in code-switching, literal translation instances with constant hesitation. The overall assessment for this item was Intermediate High level of proficiency.

In Sample 2, the same speaker responded to the following question:

Your friend asked you to help her with her math homework a week earlier, you put the date, location, and time to meet in your calendar, but for some reason, you totally forgot about it. When you got home, your sister told you that your friend called, and you realized the mistake you made earlier that afternoon. Call the friend back and leave a message to explain the situation.

Ni hao, Li You, tai dui bu qi ni! Wo jin tian xia wu wang qu tu shu guan. Yin wei wo he Xiao Wang da ping pang qiu, wo men bu zhi dao ji dian, suo yi wo mei you hui jia zao yi dian er. Wo zhen dui bu qi. Wo tai ma fan, dui bu dui? Haha... Ni sheng qi ma? Wo men jin tian wan shang ke yi xue shu xue. Ni you mei you shi jian? Qing gei wo da yi ge dian hua ni hui jia de shi hou. Zai jian.

Hello, Li You, very sorry to you! I this afternoon forget to go to the library. Because I and Xiao Wang play(ed) table tennis, we didn't know the time, so I didn't go home earlier. I am really sorry. I am troublesome, isn't it? Haha... are you angry? We can study math tonight. Do you have time? Please give me a call when you return home. Bye.

Evaluation

Global Task or Function:

The task for leaving a message on an answer machine was carried out successfully. The participant provided enough information to explain why she missed the meeting time for the occasion.

Language Fluency and Accuracy:

The participant was able to deliver the message in a good and steady flow, a little bit slower than native-like speed at times. Language use indicated only a couple of syntactical errors or tense control. For example, in the sentence "Qing gei wo da yi ge dian hua *ni hui jia de shi hou*" (Please give me a call when you return home), the 'when' clause (in italic) should go before the main imperative sentence in Chinese, but she used the English sentence order in expressing it. Another example is the verb 'wang' (forget) should precede the

past tense aspect particle 'le' and the verb 'da' (play) exhibited the same lack of control on tense aspect. Her vocabulary use was highly accurate, but pronunciation still presented several tone problems which are common in CFL students. However, the overall language use was clear and can be understood easily by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-native speakers.

Content and Text type:

The content was appropriate to the task. The paragraph length message was organized according to the conventions of every day telephone conversations in Chinese, and the apology was well delivered.

Summary and overall assessment:

The speaker appropriately addressed the friend by using her name, the common way of addressing each other between friends. The apology of using 'Tai dui bu qi ni (le)' and 'zhen dui bu qi' was appropriate and in the proper register, only with a small error of aspect in the first expression. There were only a few instances of errors which didn't affect the clarity of the communication. The speaker was able to deliver the message with sufficient accuracy and clarity to convey the intended message. So, her overall performance corresponded to the Advanced Low level of proficiency.

The comparison of Sample 1 (at the beginning of the study) and Sample 2 (at the end of the study) shows the progress of the student in terms of the speed of speaking as well as language use. There was also a significant improvement

in using particular syntactical structures correctly such as placing the adverbs and verbs in the right places in sentences although it was still evident that the speaker was using the dominant language thinking at times. The paragraph-length discourse also shows more smooth transition for integrating the language use for the intended purpose of communicating successfully.

Of the seven study participants in the first round of OPIs, two were rated Intermediate High, three were rated Intermediate Mid, one was rated Intermediate Low, and one was rated Novice High. In the second round of the OPIs, two were rated Advanced Low, three were rated Intermediate High, one was rated Intermediate Mid, and one was rated Intermediate Low. Table 4.6 provides an overview of the two ratings for the seven participants.

Table 4.5 Comparison of Two OPI Ratings

Participants	JT	TW	JM	MD	XB	XL	PL
1 st OPI	IH	IL	IH	IM	IM	NH	IM
2 nd OPI	AL	IM	AL	IH	IH	IL	IH

*Note: IH-Intermediate High IM-Intermediate Mid IL-Intermediate Low
AL-Advanced Low NH-Novice High*

More specifically, in order to provide another lens to see the participants' L2 development in their oral proficiency over the course of the study, the performance of the participants' OPIs was compared to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines and rating criteria to see if changes had happened or not. Most participants started with their proficiency levels in the Intermediate range with one exception of Novice High level of proficiency. Comparing the two sets of the oral interviews, six out of seven participants moved at least one level up and only one

participant did not show too much change in her oral proficiency level with her performance in the second interview although it was rated one level higher, but the performance barely met the criteria of that level. Based on the criteria of the ACTFL speaking proficiency guidelines, the following categories were used for analysis, focusing mainly on Intermediate level range and Advanced-Low level in discussion.

Global tasks or functions:

Since most participants were in the Intermediate level range, they were able to create with the language, initiate, maintain, ask and answer questions, and bring to a close simple conversation (ACTFL OPI Guidelines). However, Advanced-level tasks such as expressing opinions with supporting examples and descriptions (e.g. question 5, 6, and 7) proved to be difficult for the participants at this level. Most of them were unable to sustain communication with connected discourse.

Language Fluency and Accuracy:

In general, the proficiency levels of the seven participants in this study were mixed. Some participants (JT, XB) were more proficient in grammatical forms or overall pragmatic competence, but others (JM, MD, PL) were more proficient in certain areas such as overall fluency, pronunciation accuracy, or vocabulary use. The rating also showed that there was a very limited range of vocabulary and expressions among these participants compared to native

speakers, so code-switching was a common feature of the overall speaking samples in these interviews. The overall pronunciation accuracy was good, but tone errors were common in these speakers, although the tones in context didn't affect comprehension even with people unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives speaking Chinese. The participant's overall fluency varied, too. Two speakers (JT, JM) were rated Advanced Low level of proficiency with their second interviews and their speed of speaking were obviously faster than others, close to native-like speed most of the time, although their vocabulary use was still limited and their overall handling of language use showed certain roughness in different areas such as grammar, connecting discourse, or cohesive devices, etc.

Content and Text Type:

The participants were able to function with familiar content, mostly related to their daily activities, personal involvement, and familiar topics in the materials covered during the semester. Questions that asked for opinions and elaboration with more abstract and descriptive vocabulary presented challenge to them, but the questions such as talking about their personal life and school life were mostly dealt with effectively. The utterances of the speakers in the first OPIs compared to the second OPIs showed obvious changes in text type in which they were able to link more of their utterances into more complex sentences, and longer paragraph-length discourse except one speaker who still delivered considerable broken sentences that needed clarification to sustain communication.

The results of the OPIs in this study are consistent with the classroom interaction data in general, achieving better fluency and overall oral proficiency level. However, there were a couple of exceptions with one student XL who seemed to be doing better with prepared assessments in written work and in peer oral performance, but unable to demonstrate her improved proficiency level in the second oral proficiency interview. When asking about her view on the interview, she said she was nervous to do one-on-one with a teacher, and she was also having a bad day which might have affected her performance a little. Overall, she said her oral ability in a foreign language was still her biggest challenge compared to other subject areas. Looking at her overall oral interaction data, XL seemed to perform better with preparation, but she usually could not perform every effectively when she had to improvise without preparation. Two other Intermediate High level speakers at the beginning of study gained evident better fluency and overall oral proficiency level which put them into the Advanced Low level of proficiency. The communication strategies the participants used to deal with different situations presented by the interviewer reflected typical 'gaps' or 'breakdowns' at this level when they encountered difficult vocabulary words or expressions. However, these 'gaps' or 'breakdowns' became fewer in most participants during the second OPIs. The categories of language proficiency performance discussed above revealed improved overall oral proficiency levels in the seven participants with one exception in terms of fluency and accuracy of language use, global tasks and functions, and content and text type. On the basis

of our experience, this OPI assessment cannot be taken to decide on a speaker's proficiency alone, but using OPI as part of assessing the participants' overall speaking abilities with other formats of assessment can provide another window to better understand the participants' oral performance in a simulated real-life conversation.

Conclusion of Research Question 2

In the foregoing discussion of the results of the analysis of the data with regard to Research Question 2, which sought to uncover how peer interactions affected learners' L2 development, the researcher analyzed the participants' personal history interviews, language reflection journals, peer interaction data from the audio/video recordings, and their general assessments of the course. A thorough examination of each learner in a rich natural setting helped elaborate a more complete picture of each participant's language learning experiences. Since the study aimed to analyze the roles of peer interactions in language learning within a particular sample of Chinese learners, it is important to understand how participants constructed themselves as learners in the L2 context. Activity theory as an explanatory framework helped to contribute a better understanding of learners as social beings in their full participation of the classroom life.

L2 acquisition and development reflected in the changes over time was presented through a triangulation of data. The analysis of the data in relation to the second Research Question, which used the activity theory as an explanatory framework, provided a significant perspective into the learner's world for us to

better understand how agency, history, and participation are all built into ongoing activity within the matrix of learning a foreign language. Overall personal history somewhat shaped learners' perspective on learning CFL and how they learned during peer interactive work. Based on the ACTFL standards, the general assessment data showed overall achievement in all participants in relation to their classroom interaction data, but with exceptions of overall gain in individual learners. The comparison of the two OPIs also showed overall achievement in learners' oral proficiency levels except one learner who exhibited only small gains in her overall performance in the second OPI assessment. Finally, the analysis found evidence that the learners had achieved higher language proficiency in their overall language skills in different areas, mostly in speaking through numerous opportunities of interaction with peers in the target language. The next section explores the results of data analysis that corresponded the main research question. This question concerns the roles of peer interactions in a second language classroom.

Main Research Question: Roles of Peer Interaction

In order to answer the main research question, data from all data collection instruments and especially the findings from the research question 1 and research question 2 were incorporated in order to gain insight into the roles of peer interaction. The analysis of the findings has demonstrated the importance of peer interaction in the Chinese as a foreign language classroom. This section

continues the analysis above and applies it to the main research question of how peer interaction influences L2 learning in a Chinese language classroom.

As is shown in the presentation of the results in the preceding sections, the participants mutually facilitated the learning process in their efforts of learning CFL through social interaction in the collaborative dialogues. The narratives regarding each participant provide a snapshot of each individual as a L2 learner in peer interactions. More detailed discussion of the data regarding the roles of peer interaction follows.

Peer Interaction Mediates L2 Learning

In this study, the processes of learners engaging in peer interactive work in the CFL classroom and their second language development through collaborative dialogues were explored. Peer interaction in the L2 classroom, from a sociocultural perspective, facilitates language acquisition. Within this framework, language learning cannot be viewed as an immediate product of an individual; rather, it is the process by which learners engage in co-constructing their L2 knowledge through social interaction. Vygotsky's ZPD and the general genetic law of cultural development illuminate developmental processes in peer interactions in the CFL classroom as presented in this chapter. The general genetic law of development describes how assistance in the zone of proximal development leads to learning and how social interaction forms the basis of the development of thought (Vygotsky, 1981). With specific relation to L2 learning, sociocultural theory views second language learning as taking place in specific

contexts of language use, with second language learners availing themselves of the linguistic and non-linguistic tools at their disposal as they attempt to learn the second language and to learn about themselves. Speaking and writing are not just output activities in which information is exchanged between interlocutors. Instead, in groups, second language learners make use of themselves, their peers, artifacts, and other resources to mediate learning and to transform themselves (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2001). In support of this view, Otha (2001) argues that our ability as social beings to use language emerges from our social interactions.

In more recent years, second language researchers have provided more and more empirical evidence that peer-to-peer interactions in the classroom have potential benefits to second language acquisition. Peer interactions in the CFL classroom from this research study once again reveal clearly the facilitative effect on learning Chinese as a second/foreign language. Peer-to-peer interaction is not only crucial to effective learning, it also has important psychological ramifications. Classroom interaction and discourse have been recognized as complex sociocultural activities in which meaning-making is an integral process in the creation of the social identity of participants (Pennycook, 2004; Norton, 2004).

Two important themes emerged from the analysis of this study that directly address the mediating roles of peer interaction in the CFL classroom. First, peer interaction is the driving force for socialization which encourages input and feedback necessary for second language acquisition. Second, peer interaction

plays an important role in scaffolding and knowledge construction in which either a more capable peer or a less capable peer supports each other on developing conversational topics and providing information to sustain conversation in the target language.

To argue for the first point, we need to look at the important relationship between peer interactions and its discourse context. If learning is considered as a process of increasing participation in the performance of a discourse community, then peer interactions are not only necessary but play a crucial role in driving the socialization process with regard to L2 development. Analysis of L2 interactions in the classroom show that learners' responsibilities with regard to different dimensions of discourse are in essence a question of social sharedness and of the learners' positioning as responsible social agents in learning activities. In language socialization, contexts of particular norms have to be taken into consideration as L2 speakers have to take on the norm(s) of how to fit into a group in order to achieve their insider identity. Having something to say or to do in itself is part of negotiating social relationships and the distribution of rights and duties. Therefore, it is clear that peer-to-peer interactions and the construction of identities are inseparable and they provide a ground for social interaction and L2 development (Pekarek Doehler, 2002). Lantolf (2002) explains clearly the connection between internal, mental representations of learning and language development stemming from interactions between and among interlocutors of differing levels of expertise:

At its core, the theory proposes that mental functioning such as memory, attention, perception, planning, learning and development, come under the voluntary control of individuals as they internalize culturally constructed artifacts, including above all culturally organized forms of human communication. The theory argues that social relationships are transformed into psychological processes as taken control of by individuals as a means for mediating their own mental activity. (p.1)

It is very clear that in both sociocultural theory and language socialization theory, the acquisition of second language and culture as well as development of cognition critically depend on social interaction. Peer interactions in the second language classroom provide learners with abundant opportunities for such social interactions that encourage input and feedback and promote language development.

The analysis of data from this study clearly supports this argument. The interactional routines in the CFL classroom provided an interactive environment for social interaction among peers and such interactions in many ways facilitate language learning and development. The general patterns of learners' efforts in peer interaction fall into the categories of initiating conversations, asking or providing assistance to each other, prompting and modeling one another, correcting each other's errors, and positive L1 use in effective communication in the CFL classroom, all contributed to the socialization process among peers in a very productive manner. As presented earlier in this chapter, the interactional routines for peer interactive work allowed learners to observe, participate, reflect, and appropriate their participating strategies in the socialization process of talk-in-action. Open conversations, role-plays, interviews and so on in the CFL

classroom can be used effectively for studying speaking to inform second language learning. These highly contextualized learning activities provided strong empirical evidence on how learners carried out their communicative practices and what important roles peer-to-peer interactions played in this specific context of CFL classroom. Unlike teacher-fronted classroom, the learners in peer work have more responsibilities for their learning. Although there are differences in peer abilities, it is often the collaboration that helps their problem solving process.

To argue for the second point, we need to look at the overwhelmingly positive impact peer interactions have on learners' knowledge building process. As stated earlier, peer interaction plays an important role in scaffolding and knowledge construction in which either a more capable peer or a less capable peer supports each other on developing conversational topics and providing information to sustain conversation in the target language. Analysis of many instances from this study revealed clearly that peer learning has a powerful facilitative effect on second language development, not only the stronger language learners help the weaker ones as previous research has demonstrated in the ZPD, but this can be a reverse situation with generally weaker language learners assisting stronger ones in specific areas of language learning. Therefore, the mutuality among peers in the knowledge building process is undeniable. This both supports Vygotsky's notion of ZPD and opposes it with contrary examples that less capable peers can help generally more capable peers with differential knowledge in learning activities. Many times the assistance

among peers is highly mutual with both or all participants benefitable from the interaction. In many of the speech events introduced earlier in the chapter, the learners were observed to create a context of shared understanding in which negotiation of language form, meaning, and cultural aspects all co-occurred. The participants were able to complete tasks collaboratively and in the process to build their second language knowledge constructively. The different manner of assistance among peers during peer interactions were clearly beneficial to second language acquisition as the learners asked and provided assistance to each other, prompted and modeled each other, and corrected each other's errors to achieve better performance in the target language. The scaffolding process in knowledge construction among peers in the data is clearly evident and the finding is consistent with previous research in which certain tasks allow learners to pool differential knowledge, such that learners, though individually novices, and collectively become experts (Donato, 1994). This means that peer interactions do play an important role in learning a second language as these opportunities empower learners to help one another in their efforts of developing their communication skills in the new language.

Peer Interaction Promotes Individual Development

Vygotskian sociocultural theory argues, all cognitive development is first and foremost interpsychological; that is, it arises as a result of the interaction that occurs between individuals engaged in concrete social interaction (Wertsch, 1985). Based on this claim, humans gain control over natural mental functions by

bringing externally (socioculturally) formed mediating artifacts into thinking activity, and this happens as a consequence of internalization (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Vygotsky addresses internalization in the often-cited statement that every psychological function appears twice, first between people on the interpsychological plane and then within the individual on the intrapsychological plane. As we have demonstrated in this document, the process of second language learning and development involves transformative interactions that are different for each learner in different social settings, and such process is dynamic and cannot be separated from the social environment of the participants.

Peer interaction in different forms provides a necessary context that allows L2 learners to participate, negotiate, access their agency and therefore internalize the knowledge in the acquisition process. The analysis of the seven learners in this study provides a unique lens into how peer interactions allow these learners to transform themselves in the process of interacting with one another as they learn Chinese as a second/foreign language in the classroom setting. The analysis of this study suggests the following.

First, the data in this study support the sociocultural notion of development from social to individual in the second language classroom. In Swain's words, 'internal mental activity has its origins in external dialogic activity... Language learning occurs in collaborative dialogue, and this external speech facilitates the appropriation of both strategic processes and linguistic knowledge' (Swain, 2000,

p. 113). Many instances from the data of this study have shown this process in working. The learners not only changed in their ability to use the language at a greater proficiency level through peer interaction, but also changed their participation strategies to achieve better communication in the target language in the process. Taking one learner JT as an example, at the beginning of the study, she was quieter, not participating as much although she was a more capable language student among her peers, but as she observed others in her daily attendance of the peer learning activities, she started to take a much more active role in her participating strategies such as initiating conversations and providing assistance to others. In the socialization process in this CFL context, she was also observed to benefit from the peer collaborative dialogues in which she was only able to use certain linguistic knowledge with the assistance from others but became able to use that knowledge independently later. As many other examples from this study, this explains again how social interaction has the potential to foster appropriation of linguistic knowledge as well as to modify strategic processes towards greater language acquisition. This finding is not new because previous research studies have already identified learning opportunities for more proficient learners who can benefit from the collaborative process of interacting with less capable peers (Donto, 1994; Ohta, 1995, 2001). Although there are aspects of peer interaction that may not promote language acquisition, the overall picture from the analysis of this study shows that learners have received definite benefits from interacting with their peers. So the finding of this study confirms that

peer interaction provides learners with a necessary social space for negotiating meaning, and it plays an important role that mediates learner's L2 language development.

Second, the goals and motives of the participants that catalyze their activity 'are formed and reformed under specific historical material circumstances' (Lantolf and Genung, 2002: 191) in a particular community of practice. So, there is indeed a shift in individuals who might be an overall successful learner but might not be able to engage in a particular task or setting with much success, depending on the nature of the circumstances that shape the community of practice. In contrary, a less capable peer may offer very insightful linguistic or cultural suggestions to peer(s) that help the pair or group achieve better performance in a particular task completion. This process of scaffolding and co-construction often lead to the result of the learner becoming independently proficient at what was initially a jointly accomplished task (Chaiklin, 2003). This means that both learners' abilities and goals are not fixed. Rather, the process involves one's agency which is always constrained by 'social groupings, material and symbolic resources, situational contingencies, and so on (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 238). In addition, the goals and motives of the learners are 'changing' because agency of the learners is socioculturally mediated and enacted. In this sense, as Lantolf and Thorne continue to argue, there are constraints and affordances that make certain actions probable, others possible, and yet others impossible within a given time and space, depending on the

activity. This speaks to the fact that the shifting of learners' goals and motives is closely linked to their experience of interacting with others, and therefore, it is agency that links goals and motivation to action and determines individual development in the process of participating in social activities.

Peer interaction can therefore provide learners with opportunities to appropriate learning strategies and tools which language learners can eventually use on their own problem solving. This study shows that learners are capable of scaffolding each other effectively through the use of different interactive strategies. With the help of peer mediation, learners are often able to exploit the affordances (van Lier, 2000) or 'occasions for learning (Swain & Lapkin, 1998) by their peers in ways they cannot in expert/novice interaction. The important sociocultural roles of peer interaction are clearly evident in that it provides various opportunities for 'the construction of psychological tools through which developing individuals are able to increasingly participate in and produce culturally organized activity' (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.289), and in the process of attending such opportunities, learning and development occur.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, procedures of data management have been explained and data analysis for each research question has been provided. The participants of the CFL classroom in this study exhibited intricate combinations of their language use, both L1 and L2, in their collaborative interaction with one another. The analysis of collaborative dialogues within the classroom interactive routines

revealed that peer interaction in the CFL classroom had a strong facilitative effect on the learners, and it provided a great resource for learners' L2 development. The findings of research question 1 exhibited several distinctive features of peer assisted learning in the interactive routines of the Chinese classroom setting. The categories of these standout forms include initiating conversations, seeking or providing assistance, prompting and modeling, correcting each other's errors, and using L1 to mediate L2 learning. These patterns of assisted learning among peers were found to be useful and beneficial to learners' L2 development because they provided the learners with a variety of opportunities of using the target language to negotiate meanings for communication through collaboration and co-construction of language knowledge.

With regards to research question 2, findings have been obtained in terms of each learner's L2 development over the course of the semester. Using activity theory as a framework and through a triangulation of data, the analysis of the data provided a significant perspective into the learner's world in his or her participation of the peer learning activities in the CFL classroom. The findings have shown that each learner's gain in his or her overall language proficiency from peer interactions is undeniable, although there are variations in gain for each learner. Using the ACTFL standards as an assessment tool, the general course assessment data have also showed overall achievement in all participants in relation to their classroom interaction data, but individual gains were different in degrees in different areas. The comparison of the two OPIs has

also showed overall proficiency levels, although one learner exhibited very small gain in her overall performance in her second oral proficiency interview with the researcher.

Finally, the study examined the roles of peer interaction in the CFL classroom. Based on the findings from research question 1 and research question 2, the sociocultural roles of peer interaction are clearly evident in their facilitating effect with regards to second learning and development. Peer interaction data allowed the researcher to closely examine the learners' actual production of utterances and the roles such peer interaction played in learners' efforts to develop their L2 knowledge. As presented in this chapter, the relationship between social interaction and second language acquisition is undeniably important. Peer interaction involves learners as co-constructors of joint activities, and mediates second language learning and development in a powerful manner. The mediating roles of peer interaction are thus fundamentally important in the second language classroom. In summary, individual cognitive development cannot happen without social interaction because cognition is socially situated.

The implications of this analysis will be discussed in the following chapter, as well as the pedagogical recommendations and implications for future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to review, summarize, and discuss the study's research findings; to predict and provide implications of the study; and to discuss recommendations for future research. Several theoretical frameworks have informed this investigation, namely Sociocultural Theory, Second Language Acquisition, and Conversation Analysis as a methodological framework. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the roles of peer interaction in the Chinese as a Foreign Language classroom. More specifically, the study examined how peer interactions mediated second language learning and how second language development was manifested through peer interactive work in the classroom setting. The data analysis recorded in Chapter Four of this dissertation reported the results of the inquiry into the research questions. The present chapter discusses the findings of the research questions as they relate to the literature review. At the same time, this chapter explores the implications of the study for the field of second and foreign language learning and instruction. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Discussion of the Findings

This section discusses each research question and its findings as they relate to previous research in the field of second language acquisition. Question 1 was concerned with identifying how peer interaction mediated L2 learning in the Chinese as a foreign language classroom setting, and Question 2 focused on each learner and his or her L2 development that was manifested through peer interaction over time. The main research question was to examine the roles of peer interaction played in learning Chinese as a second/foreign language in the CFL classroom setting among the seven participants.

Discussion of Research Question 1

Research Question 1 examined how peer interaction mediates second language learning in the CFL classroom. Qualitative data from the classroom video and audio recordings addressed this research question. The results reported in Chapter Four indicated that the learners in the present study supported each other in a variety of ways during their participation in the peer interactive work. Throughout the peer interaction data, the evidence of peer collaboration was clear during the positive on-task actions in peer work as summarized in Table 4.3. It is shown in the general categories of initiating conversations, asking/providing assistance, prompting and modeling, correcting each other's errors, and using L1 to mediate second language learning. Within these categories of peer assisted learning, learners were clearly able to support each other effectively in their efforts of negotiating meaning in any given peer-

learning context in the CFL classroom. The findings to research question 1

indicated that:

- *Initiating conversation* presented itself as an important phase for learners to establish a meaningful interactive routine in the classroom in which intermediate and low intermediate learners were able to use different forms of discourse skill to start up, follow up, and maintain familiar conversation topics. This process appeared to be beneficial for learners to acquire different forms of discourse skill from each other.
- Learners *provided direct assistance* to each other when needed. It was often mutual, but both mutual assistance and expert/novice assistance occurred in peer interactions.
- Asking for assistance was common concerning several linguistic aspects of Chinese language, but more in the area of seeking lexical assistance in peer interactions, which appeared to be the most struggling area among these learners to convey meaning for successful communication.
- Learners also used *prompting and modeling* frequently in peer learning context when others made mistakes or struggled to complete utterances in their talk. Prompting and modeling often had facilitative effect on more successful interactions among peers.
- *Correcting each other's errors* appeared to mediate second language learning and development as learners used different types of repair initiation as resource in peer learning context for modifying input and output for communication in the target language. However, there were also instances that errors did not get corrected during peer interaction and ended up in wrong use of the language, although in considerably smaller samples.
- *Positive L1 use* appeared to be impacted by the dynamic and the purpose of the class. Learners used L1 as a tool in several different ways for collaboration: code-switching to sustain communication, private speech to guide one's thinking process, task management to move forward efficiently, or simply construct scaffolded help for each other to accomplish tasks successfully.

First, the findings indicated that *conversation initiation* in peer learning activities of a communicative language classroom was clearly important. During peer learning activities such as open conversations or group work, we found all

seven participants initiated conversations but their turn-taking initiatives varied considerably. The learners who initiated more conversations were generally more active and more engaged in their overall participation of peer talks. PL, for example, initiated the most turns in this category, and she was also the one who demonstrated strong gain from the process. PL took turns in the classroom but initiated conversations in the dorm in an effort to reinforce her language skills. The active engagement in using the language demonstrated by frequent conversation initiations such as the example of PL indicated a relationship between learner's engagement in using the language and learning outcome. It is also interesting to note that learners used certain types of questions such as greetings or specific wh-questions in eliciting information to initiate conversations might not be the ones that sustained the same topic in their follow-up turns. This shows that conversation initiation also allowed peers who might not be comfortable to initiate conversation topics to join in and benefit from the jointly produced interaction with peers. The excerpts presented in chapter four showed that conversation topics can be negotiated and unplanned in a second language classroom and spontaneity emerge from peer interaction appeared to be beneficial for learners to acquire different forms of discourse skill from each other. The results clearly indicated that conversation initiation in peer interaction was an important phase in terms of establishing a meaningful interactive routine in the CFL classroom.

Second, *providing assistance* was a common phenomenon in the CFL classroom when learners engaged in peer interactive tasks in this study. Qualitative review of the data from this study reveals that learners did constantly provide assistance to each other. Such assistance was often mutual among the learners, but both mutual assistance and expert/novice assistance occurred in peer interactive work. For example, JT in excerpt 11 provided assistance when XL encountered a difficulty in understanding a lexical item. This was a representative example of such instances because JT, a more capable student who knew considerably more vocabulary words, often provided such help to students who struggled with understanding a lexical item as shown in this example. There were also many examples of mutual assistance of one learner providing support in one area with the partner providing support in another. It was common to see the beneficial effect of getting immediate assistance in completing tasks or negotiating meaning successfully among peers.

Third, *asking for direct assistance* was common concerning several linguistic aspects of Chinese language, but more in the area of seeking lexical assistance in peer interactions, which appeared to be the most struggling area among these learners to convey meaning for successful communication. Learners asked for help when they did not know the grammar of a construction or did not understand the directions of a learning task. However, asking for direct assistance in peer work seemed to fall into the area of seeking lexical assistance. When pair or group work was used, CFL students often encountered problems in

producing a lexical item or an unfamiliar structure and they would seek immediate assistance from the other interlocutors. This occurs in several excerpts (7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12) presented in Chapter Four, but among all six examples, five of them were seeking for assistance in lexical items. Ohta (2001) pointed out, previous research has been unanimous in noting the overall benefits of peer assistance in developmentally appropriate interactive language learning tasks. The examples from the data in the present study provided clear evidence that direct assistance from peers in solving language problems were mostly appropriate to the learners' developmental level, and it was clearly beneficial for learners to build on their growing knowledge such as in the examples shown in chapter four in the process of getting or providing support to each other.

Fourth, learners also used *prompting and modeling* frequently in peer learning context when peers made mistakes or struggled to complete utterances in their talk. Prompting and modeling appeared to have a facilitative effect on more successful interactions among peers. As shown in the analysis, learners used prompts to help their peers move ahead or complete conversations collaboratively. The results of these prompts or modeling evidenced learners' L2 development in particular areas of learning such as in lexicon and syntax as illustrated in excerpts 13 and 14 of chapter four. The learners were able to use the language knowledge during the process later in their independent work, which is discussed in more detail in research question 2 in the next section. While these results support some previous research studies (Ohta, 2001; Lyster,

1998; 2004) in peer assisted learning in scaffolding individual language development, they also suggest that much more work needs to be done in terms of better understanding the effectiveness of peer prompts and modeling to L2 development.

Error corrections appeared to have a mediating effect on second language learning and development. The data examined in the CFL classroom for this study yielded evidence that error corrections mediated language learning and development because learners used different types of repair initiation as a resource in peer learning context for modified input and output for communication in the target language. For example, in excerpt 16, XL initiated a repair when TW expressed doubt in understanding her, but was immediately understood when XL modified her incorrect output through a self-initiated repair. Other examples include excerpts 20 and 21 in chapter four, when other peers initiated repairs when a speaker made an error. This was done either through direct repairs, peers' prompts, or private speech to guide the modifying process in learners' input and output as illustrated in these examples. However, the research also found that language errors, although in much smaller samples, did not get modified or corrected in peer interactions, and excerpt 19 is one such example that ended in wrong language use.

The results from this study indicated that both self-initiated and other-initiated repairs were frequent ways of how repairs were accomplished among peers in the CFL classroom. The instances presented in chapter four showed a

great deal of noticing among peers in their efforts of using the language. Noticing of other's errors can bring awareness of the language use to one's own utterances, so it is an important first step towards successful repairs among peers. Learners not only noticed other's errors, but also their own errors in the peer learning setting, which in turn provided learners with opportunities to provide corrective feedback to each other and utilize the knowledge on their own later.

However, there were also errors that did not get corrected during peer interactions from this study, in which there were individual differences in how learners responded to corrective feedback. One could be that peers might not have the knowledge of the linguistic register, or their knowledge in the particular area was the same as the speaker, so the noticing was not even there and the error(s) was not picked up. Another reason could be that the peer did not feel comfortable to initiate repairs, so consequently the errors in peer utterances were not corrected. This indicated that explicit feedback from an expert/teacher would be important for learners to draw on in order to modify their language use, and develop their language skills. The findings of error corrections among peers in this study support a beneficial role of corrective feedback in general. It is evident that error corrections are clearly useful to second language learners. Different types of corrective feedback provide different opportunities for learners to notice and attend to their language use in interacting with others.

Finally, *positive L1 use* also mediated second language learning, although it appeared to be impacted by the dynamic and the purpose of the class.

Learners used L1 as a tool in several different ways for collaboration: code-switching to sustain communication, private speech to guide one's thinking process, task management to move forward efficiently, or simply construct scaffolded help for each other to accomplish tasks successfully. Excerpt 25 in chapter four provided an example of task management in a role-play exercise. Learners used L1 as a mediating tool to manage the casting of the roles and brainstorm ideas for reaching their goals more efficiently. Excerpt 26 provided an example of TW using private speech to direct and regulate his L2 use in his interaction with JT. The negative aspects of L1 use were not addressed in this study, but while the benefits of L1 use are undeniable in learners' collaborative interaction, classroom teachers do have to establish a clear guideline for students during their peer interactive work.

The data in the present study support the work of Ohta (2001), Swain and Lapkin (1998), Swain (1985), Donato (1994), De Guerrero and Villamil (2000), and others, the second language learning process involves both input and output. Peer interaction in the second language classroom provides a variety of opportunities for learners to engage in using the language to communicate through input and output, and in the process learners guided each other toward increased production of the target language. The findings clearly point to the benefits of peer interaction in the CFL classroom. The representative examples from the data showed that learners benefited from the numerous opportunities of using the language with peers through social interaction. The sociocultural

framework being used to guide this study illuminate these data in a convincing manner.

Discussion of Research Question 2

Research Question 2 examined each learner's second language development over the course of the semester, and how peer interaction impacted his or her language acquisition. In order to better understand each learner's experience in the CFL classroom, a triangulation of data were used for analysis and each learner was discussed and reported individually. The analysis of the data provided a significant perspective into each learner's world in his or her participation of the peer learning in the CFL classroom context. The findings revealed learners' overall gain in their language learning and development, but there were variations in gain for each learner. The analysis of the multiple data revealed the complexity of second language learning process and the many factors that impacted learners' language learning and development in the classroom setting. The findings to research question 2 indicated that:

- Personal histories and goals shaped learners perspectives on learning CFL and somewhat affected learners' orientation to participate in daily learning activities with peers in the classroom with individual variations. However, the perspectives and orientation could be changed during peer collaboration process, sometimes despite of the learners' original goals and motives.
- Learners were able to expand their L2 knowledge and extend the linguistic development of their peers through a variety of collaborative opportunities in joint activity, and evidence of development in their L2 proficiency over time started to emerge during such peer interactions over the course of the study.

- Both motivated and less motivated learners benefited from the participation of peer learning activities in which an unmotivated learner might feel impelled to engage in a shared activity, although task design may affect the degree of a learner's participation.
- All the learners achieved an overall gain in their oral proficiency level with variations in each individual, reflected in the comparison of OPIs and the course assessments.

In order to understand what happened in the participants' experience with regards to their L2 development, an analysis of each learner through narratives indicated change in each learner in several respects. First, personal language learning histories and their goals towards learning CFL somewhat shaped learners' perspectives on learning the language, and they in various degrees affected learners' orientation to participate in peer learning activities. However, the perspectives and orientation could be changed during peer collaboration process, sometimes despite of the learners' original goals and motives. This study used personal history interviews with participants to gain a sense of their language learning histories and goals of learning the language. The study also used language reflection journals of the participants to gain a sense of their understanding and interpretation of the learning activities they were engaged in. Such insights into the learners' world were used to explain the different manners in both learners' strategic choices as well as their actual language development. Previous research has demonstrated the important connection between goals and performance of learners in an activity, and this study has provided further evidence in this area. In this study, the learners who were highly motivated and had a clear goal of studying the language generally used a more active approach

towards peer learning activities and they demonstrated greater change in adapting their own learning strategies. Furthermore, there was greater evidence of a knowledge transfer for these learners from peer dialogic work to subsequent individual production. For example, as illustrated earlier, PL took an active approach in her orientation to learning the language as she utilized appropriate assistance or other means of support from peers in her interactions with others throughout the study. Her data along with others indicated that a clear goal towards learning the language and her positive experience with peers all shaped her belief and contributed to her active interactive style of learning with peers in the CFL classroom. It is also clear that a learner's orientation to classroom learning can be changed due to the impact of peer collaboration process. For example, JT, a very successful language student, had a clear goal of studying Chinese, but due to her previous learning experience in Korea, she used a more silent approach in learning the language at the beginning of the study. As she was exposed to more interactive peer learning activities, she became much more engaged in using the language in communicative activities. Her participation data over the course of the study indicated her change of viewing language learning in the classroom from listening and taking notes to more active engagement in using the language in joint activities. In the process of peer mediation, JT demonstrated her continuous development in Chinese, not only in her approach towards peer learning activities, but also her overall proficiency level in meeting the course goals and the ACTFL standards in learning CFL.

This showed that the learners who had a clear goal in mind, not only attended to the given peer learning tasks more seriously than the ones who appeared to be more passive during these learning situations. These findings suggest that when designing peer-learning tasks, the teachers should take learners' goals, intentions, and shared interests into consideration to ensure more effective interaction among peers in pair or group work.

Second, the findings also indicated that learners were able to expand their L2 knowledge and extend the linguistic development of their peers through a variety of collaborative opportunities in joint activity, and evidence of development in their L2 proficiency over time started to emerge during such peer interactions over the course of the study. Many instances of assisted learning and performance in peer interaction presented in Chapter Four demonstrated such development. For example, in excerpts 12A and 13A, MD, JT, and XL were able to engage and scaffold one another's performance in which the knowledge transfer was evident from incorrect linguistic knowledge to correct knowledge. This example indicated clear evidence of learners' L2 development from collaborative dialogues to knowledge building during the peer interaction process. The collaboration process with one another not only expanded one's own L2 knowledge but also extended their peers' L2 development, and the dialogues that they produced showed the mediating process of the learners' construction of knowledge building. The narrative of each learner suggests that peer interaction affected the mechanisms of change in each learner, and such change was

grounded in various collaborative learning opportunities with peers. The many examples of such peer interaction in Chapter Four demonstrated positively the development of learners' L2 proficiency in their communication with peers as well as in their subsequent individual performances in using the target language Chinese.

Third, the findings also indicated that both motivated and less motivated learners benefited from the participation of peer learning activities in which an unmotivated learner might feel impelled to engage in a shared activity, although task design may affect the degree of a learner's participation. The findings seem to reinforce the sociocultural claim, as people participate in different culturally specified activities they enter into different social relations and come into contact with, and learn how to employ and ultimately appropriate, different mediational means (Lantolf, 2000). The change in the learners from this study showed how peers influenced both their learning approaches and their L2 learning and development in such a socializing process. Taking XB as an example, although he decided not to continue his Chinese studies the following year, during specific peer interactive activities, his thinking and learning approach seemed to be 'reconditioned' to adapt to the specific context, influenced by the dynamic process of peer interaction at the moment, resulting in effective learning of the language. Another participant, JM, was also an interesting example, who had an overall clear goal to study the language, but acted immaturely at times during his peer interactive work with others. On one hand, he was able to participate in peer

work very effectively, but on the other, he could show signs of a very distracted and ineffective learner. It was sometimes caused by his impatience with a less capable partner in pair work or generally his lack of responsibility towards task completion. Although JM's overall oral fluency was strong, he showed smaller gain in linguistic accuracy in general which was evidenced in his assessment data. This finding suggests that a learner's overall goal in studying the language may not always guide or affect a learner's learning behavior in pair or group work if the activity does not interest the participant for certain reasons. This cautions classroom teachers to be more careful when designing peer-learning activities, not only taking the content into consideration, but also pairing learners who may share similar interests and similar proficiency levels in oral work.

The analysis of the seven learners also suggest that the data collected on the same task, for example, the same role-play or pair-work, cannot be viewed in isolation from the sociocultural context of the setting in which the data were created. The learners' performance was born of dynamic interaction among different factors such as participants' goals, their personal learning histories, their personalities, and the setting. In the process of interacting with each other, learners were changing, sometimes despite their original goals and motives. Working with peers thus puts learners in a situation which requires them to engage in utterances and actions that not only relate to the course content, but also to the process of working with other peers. Since peer learning as a team has become a defining characteristic of communicative classrooms, learning how

to enlist someone's cooperation, manage the pace of a process, and other process oriented actions are important work skills for effective peer interaction in the L2 classroom, because these behaviors can transcend the activity of formal institutional learning and should be explicitly taught in the language classroom.

Another point needs to be noted here. There are certainly other variables that affected learners' L2 learning and development during peer interactive work. For example, learners' cultural backgrounds were diverse, and this factor was generally discussed within the participants' learning histories and their adopted strategies in approaching to peer interaction. However, this variable was not a focus of this study and requires another detailed separate study for future research.

Finally, using Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs) to provide another data source in examining the participants' oral proficiency provides a point of reference to assess learners' oral language abilities in the target language. Together with other sources of data, OPIs helped the researcher to gain a better sense of the participants' progression of their oral proficiency over the course of the semester, using it as an instrument at the beginning and at the end of the semester. Based on the ACTFL oral proficiency guidelines, a sample of each learner was elicited through two sets of interviews, and the data of these interviews were analyzed against the criteria set by the guidelines. The overall results of the seven participants demonstrated gain in their speaking abilities, which are consistent with the general results of participants' overall data.

However, one learner, XL, showed limited improvement in her ability of dealing with the natural flow of conversations. Her second OPI data showed some improvement, which was rated at the low end of the Intermediate Low (IL), but not as significant as other participants in this set of data. It is interesting to note that XL's overall data, especially in her course assessment data, showed more obvious gain in her language development in Chinese, but the OPI data showed very small gain in her actual spoken ability by the end of the study. This finding raises important questions about assessments and data collection.

Course assessments tend to focus on the themes of the textbooks with targeted standards, and usually provide the learners with a clear outline to study. In this sense, learners are more prepared towards more specific objectives to perform on an oral test or a written test. However, OPIs are designed for assessing students' general oral proficiency by using a variety of topics and questions. This may pose issues for some learners who are not comfortable with interviewers in such a context, so their performances might be affected during such long 20-30 minute interviews. The teacher-student relationship may also pose intimidation to certain learners, depending on how the learners perceive the speech event, and therefore affect their performance during such interviews as well.

The narratives of the seven learners provided a holistic picture of each learner in his or her cognitive development. As argued by Ohta (2000), the making of meaning in social interaction is a cognitive process that unites the

social with the individual. Examination of each learner from a Vygotskian perspective illuminates developmental processes as they are evidenced in the action of peer interactions. Activity theory provides a more specific framework to guide the analysis of these learners as shown in the narratives.

Discussion of Main Research Question: Roles of Peer Interaction

As the analysis in Chapter Four demonstrated, peer interaction played a crucial role in second language learning and development. Although peer interaction in SLA research is a relatively new area, the positive effect of peer interaction as reported in the analysis of this study in second language classrooms has become widely recognized. The sociocultural roles of peer interaction are clearly evident in the results of this study.

Peer interaction appeared to mediate L2 learning and development. The mediating roles of peer interaction in this study were evident in the dialogic processes of learners' efforts to learn Chinese as a foreign language. More specifically, first, peer interaction is the driving force for socialization which encourages input and feedback necessary for second language acquisition. This was found in the empirical evidence of numerous recorded learners' interactions that showed the scaffolded performances among peers through highly contextualized learning activities. These interactions among peers, whether it was error corrections, or other means of support, all contributed to the socializing process of learning the language effectively. When engaged in peer interactions, learners took more responsibilities for their learning, and therefore such

collaborative process that encouraged lots of input and feedback mediated learners' L2 development.

Second, peer interaction also plays an important role in scaffolding and knowledge construction in which either a more capable peer or a less capable peer support each other on developing conversational topics and providing information to sustain conversation in the target language. Many instances of peer interaction presented in chapter four clearly revealed that peer learning has a powerful facilitative effect on second language learning and development. More consistent with previous research in the ZPD, not only a capable peer helped a less capable peer, learners who were less capable could help the pair/group complete language tasks more successfully. This speaks to the fact again that the mutual contribution to the knowledge building process among peers is undeniable. In many instances observed in this study, learners created a context of shared understanding in which many aspects of the target language were negotiated and learned. This shows again that peer interaction plays an important mediating role in second language learning and development.

With regard to peer interaction, it also promotes individual development. As argued earlier, the data support the sociocultural notion of development from social to individual in the CFL classroom. Peer interaction in different forms and manners provides a necessary context that allows second language learners to participate, negotiate meanings, get/provide feedback to each other, access their agency, and therefore internalize the knowledge in the acquisition process. In this

sense, peer interaction can therefore provide learners with various opportunities to appropriate their language knowledge and learning strategies as they are immersed into the new culture of the learning context. The changes in learners from this study showed clearly the influence from their interactive routines with their peers in the CFL classroom setting, and therefore I come to the conclusion of peer interaction promotes individual development.

Theoretical Implications

In this section, implications will be drawn from the findings in this study to the theoretical frameworks which have informed its design, data collection, and analysis, namely sociocultural theory, second language acquisition (SLA), and conversation analysis (CA).

Sociocultural theory

Using sociocultural theory as a framework to explore peer interaction sheds light on our understanding of second language learning and development in the peer-learning context of the second language classrooms. Some of the most important notions of the sociocultural theory such as mediation, internalization and private speech, ZPD, and activity theory guided this investigation from the beginning to the end of the study.

The study presented here supports the findings regarding peer interaction and scaffolding in the Zone of Proximal Development and beyond (Donato 1998, 2000; Swain, 2000; Van Lier, 2000). As demonstrated earlier in several

examples, peers in this study could indeed provide collective scaffolding for each other, and expand each other's knowledge by using collaborative dialogues during peer learning activities in the following ways: 1) Peers expanded their L2 knowledge and extended their linguistic development of their peers through a variety of assisted learning and performance such as asking and providing assistance to each other, providing corrective feedback to each other, and scaffolding each other's performance by using prompts and modeling, etc. 2) Joint activity provided a variety of opportunities for private speech, fostering development in both or all learners engaged in the activity. 3) Collective dialogues were indeed tools for knowledge building as learners discovered not only what they could do with the language as well as what they could not do with the language in the peer interactive process, thus leading to critical awareness of learning the language. These findings in addition to the discussion earlier in this chapter indicated that peer interactions, in addition to quasi expert/novice interactions, would be fruitful areas of further research and are beneficial for L2 development.

Within the sociocultural framework, activity theory, as discussed earlier, offers a more specific tool for understanding the complex individual behavior and process of the learners in their participation of the learning activities. The current study supports the general findings of Gillette's (1994) study regarding the relationship between the learners' goals and their L2 success. However, the correlation between learners' general goals of learning the language and their

specific orientation towards each learning activity was not always as direct as the findings in Gillette's study. The participants in the current study presented themselves as complex individuals who came to study Chinese with their own learning histories and unique cultural backgrounds. Their orientation to study Chinese seemed to be closely associated with their overall views of the world at large: those who had traveled to China or whose close family members had a positive experience with Chinese seemed to be generally positive about learning Chinese, and approached peer learning and course assignments with a high level of responsibility. However, the study also found that other factors might have affected certain behaviors that were negative in individual learners during peer learning activities, even though the learner may have had an overall positive goal towards learning the language.

The findings of this study suggest that data collected on the same task might not be viewed as the 'same' for different learners, even though the task and the context seem to be the same for everyone involved, as demonstrated in the example of 7A, when XB got the group into the cultural aspect of bill-paying in a role-play while others viewed the activity as purely a language practice. In this example, XB actually brought the language activity to a different level when TW and MD were still thinking of using Chinese the 'American' way, which happens a lot in the CFL classroom. This means that learners may view the same learning activity differently from each other, and thus the same understanding might not be shared by different learners who are engaged in the same peer learning

activity. In this sense, as also demonstrated in JM's negative example of not engaging in peer learning activities, the negative approach towards an activity in peer learning may be caused by different views and interpretations on peer learning activities. One learner may consider an activity valuable while another learner may consider it meaningless to begin with, and therefore to fail to engage in effective learning.

Activity theory is here used as a framework for understanding peer interaction and L2 development in the CFL classroom setting. As this study and the previous studies within the sociocultural domain have shown, this framework helps researchers begin the process of understanding second and foreign language learning as inextricably bound together with cultural, social, institutional, and discursive forces (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). Within this framework, learner goals need to be taken into account in investigations of language learning and development. Better instruments need to be developed in order to obtain learner overall goals and to observe goal formation and goal changes during different learning situations. These implications suggest that further research in these areas is needed to better understand the connection between learner goals and the changing roles of learners as they engage in different learning contexts.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

SLA comprises a variety of research areas. While sociocultural theory can inform a variety of these sub-fields in SLA, the findings of this investigation are

relevant to the following issues that are worth discussion. First of all, the view of language learning has gone through an intense debate as reviewed in Chapter Two with regards to whether it is cognitive or social. Current mainstream approaches to SLA are based on the conduit metaphor of language, viewing language as means to send and receive messages containing meaning. Firth and Wagner, in their 1997 article published by a special issue of *Modern Language Journal*, challenged the traditions in the field of SLA for a new model that encourages a broader frame that integrates the old traditional approach to a broader sociolinguistically driven model.

The findings presented in Chapter Four of this study provided evidence for the assertion put forth by researchers within the sociocultural perspectives (Lantolf, 2000; Storch, 2002; Ohta, 2001; Wells, 1998) that acquiring a second or a foreign language is more than transmit messages. In addition to language use, learners also acquire the use of a new mediational tool, which allows them to exert control over the physical world and their own cognitive processes. As shown again in this study, peer interaction plays an important role in mediating L2 development because “development does not take place within the individual prompted by negotiation of meaning, but lies in the dialogic engagement itself” (Johnson, 2004, p. 130). In this study, the interaction taking place during pair work or group work was both the process and the product of development. The peer learning activities did not simply provide practice time for improving linguistic skills, but it was in the social activity itself that the process towards self-regulation

took place. The findings from this study illustrated how the dialogic engagement and the collaborative construction expanded learners' performance within the Zone of Proximal Development and beyond.

Furthermore, given the social nature of development, peer-to-peer interaction is not only crucial to effective learning, but also important in promoting learner's potential development in which learners are able to achieve what they're unable to accomplish alone. As pointed by Johnson (2004, p.135), "Interlanguage development is not only reflected in the learner's linguistic development, but also through the kind of help that is jointly negotiated between novice and expert". The findings of this study not only supported the potential development argument in Vygotsky's ZPD, but also went beyond the novice/expert scenario when peers with same level of language proficiency could scaffold each other to jointly accomplish tasks successfully. The discussion here clearly points to the benefits of collaborative peer interaction for second language acquisition.

From these observations, it is clear that second language acquisition as a field needs to look at the dialogic approach of L2 learning in the classroom in a new light. Language learning is social, and "we need to begin the process of real communication and engage in a true dialogue in which language is viewed not as an abstract object but as a living entity (Johnson, 2004, p. 189)". Therefore, peer interaction in a L2 classroom plays an important role in learners' second language learning and development.

Conversation Analysis (CA)

CA is more of a methodological approach than a theoretical framework for second language research. However, it does, as He (2004) pointed out, the basic science – telling us about “units” and “structures” of language use. According to Denzin and Lincoln (cited in He, 2004), CA, as a qualitative research method, shares the general characteristics of all other qualitative approaches – it is situated, interpretative, and empirical. Markee (2000) suggested a number of ways in which broad SLA issues may be re-specified in light of CA. In the current study, a variety of interactional processes through peer interaction in the CFL classroom were examined. CA methodology shed light on the moment-to-moment talks in action among peers in their discourse processes through correcting errors, providing prompts for each other, or other means of assisted performance, etc. In this sense, CA study of peer interaction can be valuable to better understand the discourse processes in classroom peer-learning contexts that mediate second language learning. However, although CA was a powerful approach to study peer interactions in the CFL classroom, it only presented a limited picture of learners who were engaged in talks about L2 learning, and therefore, research on peer interaction should be combined with other complementary theories to fully understand the many different aspects on learners and their L2 acquisition process.

In summary, as seen in the preceding discussion, the results of the current study support findings of previous research in the field of second

language acquisition reviewed in Chapter 2 of this document. The data indicate that the learners were able to learn and develop their second language knowledge in the dialogic process of peer interaction, thus corroborating the evidence from previous studies conducted within the sociocultural framework that language learning occurs through collaborative dialogue. The discussion will now turn to the practical implications.

Practical Implications

Implications for peer interaction in the second and foreign language classroom have been touched upon in previous sections. This section will revisit some of the ideas briefly discussed earlier and focus on more general implications for second and foreign language learning and teaching in the classroom, especially in the areas of instructional role, task design, L1 use, and performance assessments.

The role of instruction and task design are closely connected in a second language educational setting. Language teachers use a variety of learning tasks for their instructional purposes. How peer learning tasks are designed directly affects the learning opportunities of the students, and therefore, course design should take task design into consideration. ACTFL goals and standards should be recommended to all second and foreign language teachers for standards-based instruction because they provide a very useful framework for task design and implementation with sample scenarios for creating effective curriculum for language instruction.

In light of this study within the sociocultural framework, teachers should also be concerned with their students' potential performances rather than the current level of ability in peer learning context. They need to be involved in the learning process as experts modeling higher levels of performance and cognitive regulation. For example, modeling different repair initiation strategies to ensure a continued awareness among learners in their efforts to correct each other, or creating a peer interactive space in the format of a collaborative dialogue to encourage social interaction in the target language. However, conversational interaction, as suggested by Van Lier (1996), should not be limited to collaborative interaction with more capable peers only, but should include interactions with learners who are at the same level of actual development.

The results of this study speak to the impact of task design in the L2 classroom for peer interactive learning activities. In this study, the task types were mainly open conversations (free talk), pair work, group work, and role-plays. The learners participated in these activities appeared mostly to be active and very engaged, but there were also instances that appeared to be negative as discussed in earlier sections. According to activity theory, task design cannot ultimately determine the nature of the activity due to the dynamic change of the learning context. Open conversation design is a good way to provide learners with an opportunity to use the target language to express themselves without restrictions; however, activities like this could also limit conversation topics due to learners' limited language proficiency level. So, classroom teachers may need to

provide a series of familiar topics appropriate to the course coverage to encourage active participation across the board, and at the same time allow interactive space for potential development. A clear guideline to limit L1 use is also important in promoting second language use for communicative purposes during such activities.

L1 use as a positive mediational tool should be valued in the second language classroom, but a clear guideline should be established for peer learning activities and a shift to using the second language needs to be fostered through modeling and joint problem-solving efforts. Peer interaction should be viewed as social, and it is only through appropriating strategic behaviors encountered on the social plane that learners develop their self-regulation over intramental cognitive processes. Peer interaction allows learners to engage in collaborative learning. This process will in time allow peers to move towards the ability of more effectively scaffolding each other. As presented in chapter 4, L1 use could be used positively in peer interaction, but there may be other variables that affect L1 use in peer learning situations and they need to be studied in more detail in a separate study.

Finally, the results of this study also speak to the importance of oral assessments in a second and foreign language classroom. As discussed earlier, the course oral assessments at regular intervals were used to assess the learners' change in their overall oral proficiency level and their mastery of the unit in their ability to use the language in the format of pair dialogues, individual

narratives, or group project presentation. The OPIs data were used in this study to yield results. They were useful in assessing participants' oral proficiency level, but they provided only one lens into what a learner could do with the given speech events. Oral language assessments should not be limited to one type of testing or the traditional testing format only. They should be adapted to the overall goals of language education as stated in the ACTFL national standards (1999), which support the sociocultural notion of second language acquisition. Johnson (2004) suggested a dialogical approach to language testing such as assessing potential development of learners based on Vygotsky's theory, focusing on local nature of language knowledge. Her proposed model of POLA (Practical Oral Language Ability) is described in detail in her book *The Art of Non-Conversation* (2001), in which twelve principles are given. Classroom teachers should use some of the guidelines to design their oral assessments if they are to apply sociocultural theory to language testing. The oral course assessments for this study also included language lab random pairing dialogues, individual narratives on different topics, and oral presentations of language projects as a form to assess learners' oral abilities.

Language learners need to be viewed as active participants in their own learning process. Students' personal learning histories, cultural backgrounds, socio-historical meanings of the selected course materials all need to be incorporated in the second and foreign language classroom.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study, beginning with the small sample of participants from a particular context. The present study focused on one type of small group of learners who were from a selective admission process into the private college preparatory school, so the results are not representative of the second language learners in general for this age level. In addition, the small sample prevented any generalizations to be made about the results of the study, and therefore no claims were intended about generalizing the impact of peer interaction in SLA from the accounts of this study.

Second, this case study followed a one-semester design to investigate the learners' second language development, but it was unrealistic to expect big changes in such a short period of time. The small sample of learners prevented any generalizations to be made about the results of the study. Nevertheless, the changes in individual learners were evident from the moment-to-moment interactions of the classroom data within a short period of time. While this was worth noting, this study suggests that research into peer interaction in second and foreign language classrooms needs more longitudinal studies to better understand learners' cognitive development over time.

Third, the researcher's dual role as a researcher and a teacher may be taken as an issue of threat to the interpretation and conclusion of the data in this study. As discussed in the methodology chapter, the concept of validity is difficult to define in a qualitative study. The researcher's shared experience and history

with the participants does not necessarily confer the capacity to secure more authentic insider perspectives and interpretations. There are multiple perspectives for qualitative researchers to use their viewpoints for establishing validity in a study. Acknowledging the existence of such influence, the researcher clearly defined validity as how accurately the accounts represent the participants' realities of his or her social world and those accounts were credible to them within their realities. In accomplishing this, multiple forms of data such as personal history interviews, language reflection journals, and getting feedback constantly from the participants were used to protect against the risk of the researcher's subjectivity in her dual role. In addition, the researcher believed that she had a moral and legal responsibility to teach her students, treating them with compassion and creating learning experiences that are educationally meaningful to them. Given such responsibilities, the quality of teaching should take priority and the research should serve the educational experience of the students. Therefore, the research activities in a way should be commensurable to classroom learning activities, so they would serve the major goal of language learning in the classroom. Taking these double roles in her commitment, the researcher was able to monitor her choice making in the research process and contribute positively to the more authentic research findings in this study.

Finally, instrumentation of the OPIs might be a threat pertaining to the validity of the interpretations. Although the OPIs were conducted on all the participants at about the same time with the same questions which established

concurrent validity (Bachman, 1990), the ratings could be subjective by a single rater – the researcher, which may have affected the validity issue in interpretations of the learner performance. However, this threat was significantly reduced by a triangulation of data, so not just a single score was used to assess a learner's oral proficiency. This issue was also addressed by the theoretical framework that guided the formation of the interview questions for the OPIs. Based on the principles of the sociocultural theory, language testing should concern the local nature of language knowledge, and the instrument of interview questions were developed based on the participants' boarding school life from both classroom setting and the residential setting. However, in designing future research, each interactive oral event should be rated by at least two (or more) raters if possible, so the threat of interpreting the participants' oral interview event could be eliminated.

Despite of all the limitations discussed above, the findings are encouraging, and suggest further research within the theoretical framework adopted for the current study.

Directions for Future Research

As indicated in the foregoing discussion, the rich data collected during this investigation offer a variety of research avenues. Qualitative methodology requires the in-depth investigation of small numbers of participants in varied contexts. Studies (Swain, 1985; Donato, 1994; Brooks, Donato & McGlone, 1997; Otha, 2001) by many sociocultural researchers, also supported by the present

study, suggest that language learning processes occur through collaborative dialogue. By its very nature, the qualitative study is limited in the number of participants and the context in which it takes place. Therefore, there is a need for many more context-based studies that explore the ways in which learners assist each other through dialogues in peer-learning settings. Since this study examined second language learning in an instructional setting, the recommendations are limited to instructional and institutional second language learning.

The role of teacher in task design needs to be further investigated. The correlation between teacher's educational philosophy, beliefs, and the task design for learning activities needs to be investigated. This study focused on learners in peer-learning context and excluded the role of teacher in instructional design, but it can be argued that classroom task design can be heavily influenced by a teacher's perspective on language education.

The impact of learners' cultural backgrounds is also worth further investigation. There were clear indications that the impact of cultural backgrounds affected learners' basic orientation to peer interaction, but this variable was not studied in detail in this investigation. However, this study reveals that such variable will be important for further investigation. Continued investigation into the learners' different cultural backgrounds will contribute to a clearer understanding of learners' basic orientation and behaviors when they engage in peer interactive situations for language learning and development. It

would also be interesting to conduct studies such as this one in a different context such as learning a different foreign language in a public high school in the US, or learning Chinese as a foreign language in a Chinese setting instead of an American setting. Such research studies will explore second language acquisition in different contexts and what role learners' cultural backgrounds would play in their interaction with others to acquire the targeted language in those contexts.

It would also be beneficial if future studies incorporated a consideration of the learners' perspectives regarding the peer interaction tasks for the investigation. The participants' comments would provide an important perspective in the analysis of the data and the understanding of the implications for the field of L2 learning and for classroom practices.

Recommendations for future research include longitudinal studies of classroom peer interaction to investigate L2 development over time. In order to gain a better understanding of second language learning processes, longer time span to study situated L2 learning is important to observe such development at different intervals as L2 learners use the language in their daily lives in the classroom. CA is also a useful methodology for tracking the moment-by-moment development of language learners' performance in action. The close engagement with the data for conversational analysis allowed the researcher to discover the many factors involved in the language learning process. Through careful investigation and examination of many learning situations by different

researchers, the field of SLA, especially in the area of learner-centered research, will be greatly enriched in the future.

Conclusion

The current study analyzed the peer interactions of seven intermediate Chinese learners as they engaged in peer interactive work in the classroom. The purpose of the study was to discover the roles of peer interaction in the CFL context in which the learners co-constructed their learning experiences through peer interaction.

This research has provided a glimpse into the complex processes of seven Chinese learners engaged in collaborative peer interactions in the classroom setting. The richness of the data has laid the groundwork for future investigations into the significance of learners' specific strategic behaviors, the impact of their cultural backgrounds on these behaviors, the role of instruction in promoting L2 learning, and developmentally appropriate design of peer learning tasks, among others. Hopefully, these findings will lead to an expanded dialogue about classroom peer interaction as a mediational tool for effective L2 learning and teaching.

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APPENDIX A: Institutional Review Board letter

University of New Hampshire

Research Conduct and Compliance Services, Office of Sponsored Research
Service Building, 51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585
Fax: 603-862-3564

05-Sep-2008

Wu, Lei
Education, Morrill Hall
325 Pleasant Street
Concord, NH 03301

IRB #: 4066

Study: Understanding SLA through Peer Interactions in a Chinese Classroom - A Sociocultural Perspective

Review Level: Expedited

Approval Expiration Date: 28-Sep-2009

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved your request for time extension for this study. Approval for this study expires on the date indicated above. At the end of the approval period you will be asked to submit a report with regard to the involvement of human subjects. If your study is still active, you may apply for extension of IRB approval through this office.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects*. This document is available at <http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html> or from me.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,


Julie F. Simpson
Manager

cc: File
DeMitchell, Todd

APPENDIX B: Consent Letters

August 25, 2007

Dear student,

As you know, I have been working on my doctoral degree at the University of New Hampshire. I am very interested in learning more about many different factors that influence second language learning in the classroom, especially peer interactions in our Chinese classroom. I am proposing my doctoral dissertation study on understanding Second Language Acquisition (SLA) through peer interaction in a Chinese classroom.

I have chosen to focus on the roles of peer interactions and social aspects of language learning in the classroom setting. I am particularly interested in observing and interviewing you and other students in my Chinese classes. With your permission, I hope to observe you in learning activities and conduct both informal and formal interviews with you on your experience of learning Chinese. I will also videotape some class sessions to study how students interact with each other and how I as a teacher facilitate learning in general. With your permission, I will also look at your reflection journals, and together with class observation and interviews, I am hoping to explore and learn more about the various factors that affect learning Chinese.

I intend to start the project on September 10, 2007 and end on December 15, 2007, approximately three months. During this project, the class will be conducted as usual. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and it will not affect your grades in any way. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Please do feel free to make your choice of participating in this study or not. If you have any concerns on my research work and at any point do not feel comfortable to talk to me, please feel free to talk to Ms. Hornor, my Division head to express your concerns at any time. You can contact her at 229-4667, jhornor@sps.edu, or stop by her office on the first floor of the Schoolhouse. Please sign below indicating your choice and return it to me. Thank you in advance for your support and understanding.

Sincerely,

Lei Wu

Ms. Lei Wu (Chinese Teacher)
Room 123, Schoolhouse, SPS
(603) 227-1106 (lwu@sps.edu)

- _____ Yes, I am giving permission for Ms. Wu to observe and interview me as well as to study my journal writings and videotape my class.
- _____ Yes, I am giving permission for Ms. Wu only to (please circle the ones that apply)
- _____ *a. observe me in class* *b. interview me*
- _____ *c. study my journal writings and other class work* *d. videotape my class*
- _____ No, I am not giving permission for Ms. Wu to observe and interview me as well as to study my journal writings and videotape my class.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

August 25, 2007

Dear Parents,

I am Lei Wu, your child's Chinese teacher at St. Paul's School. As you know, I am also a doctoral student at the University of New Hampshire. Right now I am proposing a qualitative case study for my doctoral dissertation on understanding Second Language Acquisition (SLA) through peer interactions in a Chinese classroom – a sociocultural perspective. I would like to investigate how peer interactions mediate second language learning and teaching in the classroom and if there is a correlation between certain types of interactive learning activities and student second language development in the classroom. In doing so, I am hoping to explore how I could adjust my curriculum to better meet the students' needs of learning Chinese.

I have chosen to focus on the roles of peer interactions and social aspects of language learning in the classroom setting. I am particularly interested in observing and interviewing students in my class who have different cultural and linguistic background. I am interested in understanding their experience of learning Chinese as a second/foreign language. I am asking for your permission to observe your child learning in class, interview him/her on both a formal and informal basis, videotape his/her class, and study his/her reflection journals. Videotapes will be used for research purposes only. In presenting my research in the future, your child's identity will remain anonymous. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and it will not affect your child's grades in anyway. Your child can withdraw from the study at any time. My dissertation committee and I are the only people who will have access to the data.

If you have any questions about the study you can either email me at lwu@sps.edu or call me at 603-227-1106. If you have any questions for the university about my work you can contact Professor Todd DeMitchell, my dissertation committee chair, at 603-862-5043 and Julie Simpson from UNH Office of Sponsored Research at (603 862-2003). I have enclosed two copies of this letter. Please sign one indicating your choice and return it to me. The other copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lei Wu (Doctoral student at UNH and Faculty at St. Paul's School)

_____ Yes, I am giving permission for Ms. Wu to observe and interview my child as well as to study my child's journal writings and videotape his/her class.

_____ No, I am not giving permission for Ms. Wu to observe and interview my child as well as to study my child's journal writings and videotape his/her class.

Print Name: _____ Signature: _____

APPENDIX C: ACTFL National Standards in Foreign Language Education

ACTFL National Standards in Foreign Language Education

The national standard for foreign language education center around five goals: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities -- the five C's of foreign language education.

Statement of Philosophy

Language and communication are at the heart of the human experience. The United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. This imperative envisions a future in which ALL students will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at least one other language, modern or classical. Children who come to school from non-English backgrounds should also have opportunities to develop further proficiencies in their first language.

Communication (*Communicate in Languages Other Than English*)

Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions

Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics

Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Cultures (*Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures*)

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied

Connections (*Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information*)

Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language

Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures

Comparisons (*Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture*)

Standard 4.1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own

Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Communities (*Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home & Around the World*)

Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting

Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

APPENDIX D: Formal Interview Questions

Formal Interview Questions

1. Can you describe how you first started to learn Chinese?
2. How do you see yourself today, in terms of learning the language?
3. What does learning Chinese mean to you?
4. Can you describe a particular difficult/challenging aspect in your experience that is related to learning Chinese (or another language)?
5. How do you see yourself in the future with this experience of learning Chinese as a second language in high school?
6. To what extent, you consider yourself active in Chinese class?
7. What, if anything, would you change about your language learning experience if you could?
8. What do you know about Chinese culture?
9. What is your cultural background? In what way it is different from Chinese culture?
10. How does your family view learning Chinese (or other foreign language learning)?

Sample (Informal) Interview Questions

1. What do you think of peer interactions in the Chinese classroom?
2. What types of peer interactions are the most helpful to you? For example, the free conversations at the beginning of class? Particular role play exercises? Tell me why?
3. In terms of interacting with your friends in class this week (for the past two weeks), what did you learn from them? Anything new? A new language point? A new structure? A new cultural concept? How did you learn it (them) from talking to your peers?
4. Observing our daily classroom interactions (or watching videos of peer interaction), what strikes you the most? Why?
5. How do you view your roles of interacting with others in class for learning Chinese?

APPENDIX E: ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines – Speaking

SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES—SPEAKING (REVISED 1999)

SUPERIOR

Superior-level speakers are characterized by the ability to:

- participate fully and effectively in conversations in formal and informal settings on topics related to practical needs and areas of professional and/or scholarly interests
- provide a structured argument to explain and defend opinions and develop effective hypotheses within extended discourse
- discuss topics concretely and abstractly
- deal with a linguistically unfamiliar situation
- maintain a high degree of linguistic accuracy
- satisfy the linguistic demands of professional and/or scholarly life

ADVANCED

Advanced-level speakers are characterized by the ability to:

- participate actively in conversations in most informal and some formal settings on topics of personal and public interest
- narrate and describe in major time frames with good control of aspect
- deal effectively with unanticipated complications through a variety of communicative devices
- sustain communication by using, with suitable accuracy and confidence, connected discourse of paragraph length and substance
- satisfy the demands of work and/or school situations

INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate-level speakers are characterized by the ability to:

- participate in simple, direct conversations on generally predictable topics related to daily activities and personal environment
- create with the language and communicate personal meaning to sympathetic interlocutors by combining language elements in discrete sentences and strings of sentences
- obtain and give information by asking and answering questions
- sustain and bring to a close a number of basic, uncomplicated communicative exchanges, often in a reactive mode
- satisfy simple personal needs and social demands to survive in the target language culture

NOVICE

Novice-level speakers are characterized by the ability to:

- respond to simple questions on the most common features of daily life
- convey minimal meaning to interlocutors experienced with dealing with foreigners by using isolated words, lists of words, memorized phrases and some personalized recombinations of words and phrases
- satisfy a very limited number of immediate needs

APPENDIX F: National Standards for Chinese Language Learning

Appendix F

全美中小学中文学习目标 Standards for Chinese Language Learning

COMMUNICATION 沟通 GOAL ONE

运用中文沟通

Communicate in Chinese

Standard 1.1

Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions in Chinese.

Standard 1.2

Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics in Chinese.

Standard 1.3

Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

CULTURES 文化 GOAL TWO

中国多元文化

Gain Knowledge and Understanding of the Cultures of the Chinese-Speaking World

Standard 2.1

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures of the Chinese-speaking world.

Standard 2.2

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the cultures of the Chinese-speaking world.

CONNECTIONS 贯连 GOAL THREE

贯连其他学科

Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 3.1

Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the study of Chinese.

Standard 3.2

Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the Chinese language and culture.

COMPARISONS 比较 GOAL FOUR

比较语言文化之特性

Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.1

Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the Chinese language with their own.

Standard 4.2

Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of Chinese culture with their own.

COMMUNITIES 社区 GOAL FIVE

应用于国内与国际多元社

Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home and Around the World

Standard 5.1

Students use the Chinese language both within and beyond the school setting.

Standard 5.2

Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using Chinese for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

APPENDIX G: Sample Questions for Student Reflection Journals

Sample Questions for Student Reflection Journal Entries:

Each week I will write specific questions for that week's activities. Although the wording will vary from week to week, they will be similar in learning about students' perspectives on these learning activities.

Some Example Questions

1. What learning activity (or activities) this week did you like the most? Why? What learning activity (activities) this week did you dislike the most? Why?
2. What do you think of this week's role-play exercises? Did you like the more open-ended ones or the given topic ones with more specific directions? Which exercise do you think provided the most effective practice of your oral Chinese? Why?
3. What aspects of the class contributed the most to your learning? (at the end of the fall term)
4. What parts of the class distracted you the most from learning? Can you give some examples? What suggestions do you have for improving the class?
5. What do you like about interacting with peers? Do you correct each other's errors in using the language? Do you often use the information your peers provide either in class or elsewhere when using Chinese for communication later?
6. What types of feedback from peers are useful to you? Why do you think so?

APPENDIX H: Oral Proficiency Interview Questions

Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Questions

1. 请介绍一下你自己：你的家庭，爱好，等等。
2. 请描述一下你在这个住宿学校的生活：你典型的一天。
3. 你去年夏天都做了些什么？去了哪儿？
4. 假如你的一个朋友请你周末去看一场电影，你已经同意跟他一起去。可是另一个朋友邀请你周末去城里看另一个你非常想看的电影，你决定和第二个朋友去。给你的第一个朋友打一个电话跟他解释一下这个情况。
5. 在住宿学校你最喜欢做的事和最不喜欢做的事是什么？为什么？
6. 请比较一下在你今年选的课里，你最喜欢的课和最不喜欢的课是什么？为什么？
7. 你认为怎么样做才能进一个好大学？
8. 请想一想，如果晚上十点半以后，两、三个学生在走廊里或者你的房间外面吵，你睡不着觉，所以你开门出去告诉他们安静下来。你会怎么对他们说？
9. 在你以前的学校或者这个学校，你有没有过一个非常糟糕的经历？请你描述一下那个经历。
10. 你下个周末有什么打算？做什么？

1. Tell me something about yourself, your family, your hobbies, etc. (warm-up personal)
2. Describe your typical day (present-tense narrative – school life)
3. What did you do this past summer? (past-tense narrative – describe experience)
4. You have agreed to go to a weekend movie with a friend, but another friend invited you for another movie, which is the one you really want to watch, give your first friend a call to tell him that you will not be able to go with him. (Role-play – explaining and apologizing)
5. What do you enjoy the most or the least at the boarding school? Why? (Opinion)
6. What school subject do you like the most or the least? Why? (comparison – support opinion)
7. How do you get into a good college? (Describing a process)
8. Pretend at the dorm after 10:30 at night, a couple of dorm mates were making a lot of noises in the Common Room, you couldn't sleep, so you went out to say something to quiet them down (Role-play – complaining)
9. Tell about a bad (or a good/fun/interesting) experience at your previous school (past-tense narrative)
10. What's your plan for the coming weekend? (winding-down)