

**Kim McDonough & Alison Mackey (eds).** 2013. *Second language Interaction in Diverse Educational Contexts: A Review*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 332.

*Second language Interaction in Diverse Educational Contexts* is a book edited by Kim McDonough and Alison Mackey, divided into three main sections: “Interactions in L2 classrooms”, “Interactions involving technology” and “Interactions in other educational settings”. In the preface the editors explain that the book collect empirical research studies that analyze the topic of interaction in a wide range of educational settings. All these settings are of an authentic educational nature (classroom, conversation group, etc.) and not only established for research purposes. By doing that, the editors wanted to include contributions where at least one aspect of the research (context, design, etc.) was not typical of the interaction scene what made them, somehow, unique in the interaction field to date.

Within the first part, “Interactions in L2 classrooms”, we find YouJin Kim’s contribution where the author investigates the impact of task repetition and procedural repetition in two different EFL all-girls junior high school classes in South Korea. The chapter reports on the relationship between task repetition, learners’ attention to linguistic forms and teachers’s and learners’ perceptions of task-based interaction. The study, undertaken in English as a foreign language classes in Korea, considers two kinds of classroom interactions: teacher-learner and learner-learner. After having tried different tasks with different groups, the author concludes that it is still unclear if repeating the same task content or using an identical task procedure is what makes the difference. At the same time, Kim’s points out that there is little research done on how teachers implement the result of task repetition in class. The author explains that she is conscious of the limitations this particular study had, for instance, the type of students involved (all-girls junior high school in South Korea) and the fact that only one task type was used, and points out that individual differences were not taken into consideration. The study shows that more research should be carried out regarding implementing instructional tasks in foreign and second language contexts and also on how to sequence tasks when organising task-based syllabi or larger curricula.

María Basterrechea and María del Pilar García Mayo’s “Language-related episodes during collaborative tasks”, compares CLIL and EFL learners to explore

how collaborative tasks affect CLIL learners' attention to formal aspects of the target language. The study was carried out with 81 Basque-Spanish bilingual EFL learners (age 15 to 16) in their first year of post-compulsory secondary education, 41 of which had attended classes in schools that implemented a CLIC program while the rest, other 40, had had English as a school subject in traditional EFL classrooms. They all came from three different schools in the Basque country in Spain. All the students carried out a form-focused task with third person singular present morpheme –s as the focus under study but they were not aware of it. Instead, they were engaged in a meaning-focused task where they had to reconstruct the information from a passage dealing with a topic of interest. The result of the study indicates that the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present tense marker is a problematic form for Basque-Spanish bilinguals but that CLIL learners produced more LRE's than EFL's ones. Nevertheless, while performing the task there were many episodes in which all learners discussed 3<sup>rd</sup> singular forms, what suggests that the dictogloss was effective and promoted attention to form. The study seems to confirm previous similar studies that affirm that CLIL learners participate more frequently and more effectively than EFL learners. Limitations found: the data of the findings come just from one form-focused task, the use of post-tests would be beneficial to assess the impact of LREs on learners and the impact of learners' roles and social factors should be considered in further research on the topic.

In Chapter 3, "The impact of increasing task complexity on L2 pragmatic moves", Roger Gilabert and Julia Barón bring together three areas within SLA to help us understand how learners use their L2: task complexity, interaction and interlanguage pragmatics, what had never be done before. Thirty-six 19-21 years old Catalan/Spanish bilinguals taking English as a foreign language grouped in eighteen pairs volunteered to participate in the study. As general conclusions, the authors believe that the small number of participants is one of the limitations of this research, and that the study of mitigation should be included and the role of proficiency clarified in further studies. Besides, more effort should be dedicated to see how task design can be coupled with pragmatic instruction in order to make the most of learners's pragmatic moves to become competent learners of an L2.

In Chapter 4, "Task and traditional practice activities in a foreign language classroom context", Alison Mackey et al. compare the effectiveness of tasks and traditional practice activities at promoting second language development. The study was carried out in an authentic instructional context among 37 Japanese

students at a private university in Tokyo. The age range was 18-20 and it was a homogenous group within the College of Liberal Arts that met twice a week to study English. The final goal was to check whether traditional activities that provided learners with opportunities for practice worked better than task-based activities within the context of meaningful interaction with an interlocutor in an EFL context. The results imply that one activity type is not meaningfully more effective than another and that both have a role to play in helping students improve their command of a second language. There were some limitations though: the students' number was small, the class period too tight so that little time was allocated to practice new forms, individual learner differences such as anxiety levels were not considered, etc. Future research should take notice of all those factors.

“Building explicit L2 Spanish knowledge through guided induction in small-group and whole-class interaction”, by Elvis Wagner and Paul Toth, explores interactions among American high school learners of L2 Spanish to use the pronoun “se” and promote grammatical consciousness about its use. The study was conducted among 17 students ranged 15 to 18 years old all Caucasian, in a public suburban US high school. Students met every other day for about 90 minutes and the data were collected 8 weeks after the teacher who conducted the experiment began a full-time internship with the class. The interaction among the students was recorded and later on, analyzed but the sample class was small and the study took place in one class of learners with only one teacher for three consecutive class periods, what make the experience's results limited. Besides, the students knew that the interactions were going to be audio and video-recorded, what may have affected the results slightly. In the end, the experience was found positive and the interaction originated through the tasks useful and meaningful.

Rob Batstone and Jenefer Philp's “Classroom interaction and learning opportunities across time and space”, Chapter 6 in the volume, reports on the results of an experience undertaken to 12 students, advanced proficiency learners of English who had studied the language for over seven years and had passed an IELTS test. Most of them spoke Mandarin (8) but others also Korean, Cantonese, French, Thai, and German/Czech. They had lived in New Zealand from a month to about one year. At the end of the study's explanation the authors affirmed that perhaps the most clear limitation of the study had to do with introspective

data and that more research on the role of teacher and peer interaction in L2 learning could benefit from the use of introspective techniques directed to explore the relationships between the students and their perceptions of other students' contributions to learning as well and themselves.

Part II of the present volume starts with Shannon Sauro's "The cyber language exchange. Cross-national computer-mediated interaction". The chapter deals with the text-chat interaction of second language learners and teacher trainees engaged in an online exchange linking classes in Sweden and the United States. Students participating met online 6 times during the semester by means of the program Live Messenger and each US student acted as a chat partner and a tutor of a Swedish student on four writing tasks. Sauro evaluates the language learning potential of the experience considering that chatscripts were generated as these can be used in synchronous interactions both outside of class meetings and during these ones. While the telecollaboration described was mainly form-focused the curiosity of participants motivated the discussion and comparison of cultural topics, what can be taken into account in future studies.

Chapter 8 deals with "Using eye tracking as a measure of foreign language learners' noticing of recasts during computer-mediated writing conferences". Bryan Smith and Claire Renaud's study uses eye tracking to explore the relationship between second-language recasts, noticing and learning by means of computer-mediated communication. 16 intermediate learners of Spanish and German used chat conferences with their instructor and took posttests one week later. During the experience eye tracking was thought to be a useful tool in order to explore attention to form. One of the limitations of this study though, consists on using an existing technology in a different way in order to explore phenomena for which that technology was not created. At the same time, the small sample size used in the study would require the confirmation of any conclusion in further experiences.

Chapter 9 presents "A corpus approach to studying structural convergence in task-based Spanish L2 interactions" by Joseph Collentine and Karina Collentine, a study where 53 third year university level learners at a medium-sized university in the USA participated. They were enrolled in a course designed to revise grammatical structures and in another one to develop conversational skills. The tasks were integrated into two class periods of 1.5 hrs and no grades were

awarded. Although the experience had certain limitations language professionals could benefit from it promoting certain aspects of learners' L2 development by means of similar interactive tasks.

In "Preemptive feedback in CALL" Trude Heift presents a study performed with 185 learners of German from two Canadian universities being their average age 20.2 years. Considering that both universities had no language requirements it seems clear that the students were highly motivated to learn German. They had to undertake a sentence completion task and afterwards feedback was provided. Differences regarding proficiency levels and error types were found very relevant since the beginner students performed much better than the early intermediate ones. Also, the access to feedback through technology was proved to be beneficial since learners usually feel uncomfortable when receiving feedback orally in group settings. In general, it was observed that the use of CALL programs reduced the students' frustration while enhancing SLA.

Chapter 11, "Learner perceptions of clickers as a source of feedback in the classroom", by Ellen Johnson Serafini deals with the use of learner response systems or "clickers" with the aim of providing insight into the effectiveness of this system in foreign language classrooms. The participants were 63 students enrolled in beginning Spanish foreign language classrooms at a private East coast university belonging to seven classes. The students, native speakers of English with a mean age of 19.1 were asked to reflect on three different components: vocabulary, language awareness and practice/participation. The learner perceptions of clickers were, in general, very positive as they felt motivated and involved as the interaction provided opportunities for self-assessment and the possibility to compare their own performance and their peers'. Even if clicker use is quite broadly used in scientific and general education disciplines, its use is still limited in foreign language contexts. As a conclusion, the author points out that clicker activities should be paced according to students' needs and used as a supplementary activity rather than as a replacement for oral communication exercises. In any case, its effectiveness indicates that further evaluation is worth.

Part III of the volume, "Interactions in other educational settings" starts with Chapter 12, "International engineering graduate students' interactional patterns on a paired speaking test", by Talia Isaacs. The study took place among 84 international engineering graduate students in the province of Alberta, Canada,



an oil-rich province that has suffered from a shortage of these types of professionals for the last decades. Although the government has made a considerable effort to attract foreign engineers, the communication challenges they have had to face are obvious and have caused them problems to integrate into major international engineering companies. Regarding the study, the content of the task consisted on organizing a business trip for a company, what is not a task that the engineers participating on the experience are likely to encounter in their workplace. Nevertheless, as the participants belong to different engineering fields it is difficult to design more adequate tasks. As one of the main challenges that international engineers face is engaging in interactions with members of the host community this study is meaningful and would require further development.

Chapter 13 reports on “The effectiveness of interactive group oral for placement testing”, a study developed at the Department of Linguistics and Languages’ MA TESOL Program at Michigan State University, which offers free English classes for immigrants, refugees, and spouses of local graduate students and employees. Paula Winke, the author, describes how the placement test was redesigned to better adjust to the conversation classes’ final goals. During the redesigning the reading test was eliminated and a speaking test used instead. 128 people took the test. They belonged to 35 different countries, spoke 26 native languages and most of them were recent immigrants and/or refugees although there were also other types of participants. The tests were rated by 28 graduate students belonging to the Department mentioned above. As a result of the test given, only 4 out of 128 test takers wanted to move to a different class, what proves that the experience was a success. Still language testing programs that utilize group orals for different types of learners should develop a set of articulated tasks that can be administrated depending on the L2-speaking level of the students taking the test. Besides, the test-administrators should be allowed to intervene in those cases where one learner dominates, the test is not working, etc. etc., so that the final score assignments work properly.

Nicole Ziegler et al focus on the potential learning opportunities of interactions among eleven intermediate L2 German learners that participated in conversation groups where grammar and lexis were important but also social and interactional practices. “Interaction in conversation groups. The development of L2 conversational styles” proves that informal settings such as conversation groups provide less anxiety to introverted learners than formal ones. The

environment tried to replicate authentic, real-world conversational contexts and nearly all learners found their participation in the conversational group positive and were willing to interact. Regarding the limitations of the study, its duration was short since students met only once per week during six consecutive weeks. Besides, it is not clear if the results of the experience would be the same in other social and educational contexts. Further research in naturalistic settings would need to explore such limitations.

Chapter 15, “Language production opportunities during whole-group interaction in conversation group settings”, by Kim McDonough and Teresa Hernández González, describes the study undertaken at Concordia University between preservice teachers and ESL speakers during conversation groups in four different interactional contexts: communication, content, management and language. A total of 15 preservice teachers enrolled in a TESL methods course during a first year in a Bed TESL program participated in this experience. They ranged from 19 to 47, had very diverse backgrounds and the vast majority mastered two different languages. Regarding the ESL participants, they were enrolled in undergraduate or graduate degree programs at the same university as the preservice teachers and the group included permanent residents of Canada who had emigrated from diverse countries, international students in Canada and native Quebecers. Conversational classes were optional and the participants only paid a small fee to attend. The final dataset consisted on 15 conversation group sessions that were video-recorded and transcribed. The study proves that preservice teachers dominated the conversation groups with regard to total words. Nevertheless, conversations were not audio-recorded and this would have been beneficial to get precise information about the language production opportunities in these types of conversation group settings. Besides, adopting a longer-term perspective would be convenient in order to check the preservice teachers’ development over time since in this study they were only allowed two conversation group sessions and did not elicit large quantities of talk from the ESL participants. This fact proves that the teachers need help to create interaction among L2 students since these language production opportunities are very helpful for their language studies development.

“Second language interaction in diverse educational settings” is a book that reflects nowadays panorama in terms of the huge diversity of possible settings language teachers can find themselves in when developing their work. In that

respect, the volume reflects the complexity and variety of our societies today and the urgent need of their individuals to communicate properly. In fact, the central word of all the studies presented in the book is “interaction”, a key concept in language studies since it gives the students the occasion to communicate thoughts, needs, etc. What language students usually want is to be able to interact as soon as they can in the setting where they are by using what they have learned. This is the way they see progression as interacting helps them realize how far they are from their final goal when learning a language.

The volume is properly structured into three different parts although all the studies are equally conducted in authentic educational settings and either report their findings or describe the potential room for improvement. The first section of the volume presents more conventional settings in L2 classrooms, the second part deals with those studies where technology is an important component and finally, the third part refers to less conventional settings when teaching a second language. The only drawback I find is that some studies have been developed with quite a small number of participants what makes difficult the transference of final results to similar settings but with a much larger number of students.

Many ideas can be extracted from the book for future studies as the need for improvement or further research is clearly verbalized in all the chapters. Therefore, L2 teachers willing to take a further step in interaction issues will find the volume helpful as it will easily show them the gaps where further action is needed in order to help language students be more proficient in their career development and life by means of being able to communicate proficiently in their own settings.

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