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Abstract

This qualitative study critically examines the intelligibility of the teacher talk of novice native speaker English language teachers. It focuses on difficulties teachers face in adjusting their own English so that their learners can understand them. The paper uses two data sources: learners' perceptions of recorded teacher talk and analysis of the teacher talk itself. For the teacher talk analysis, the study develops an integrated framework based on key concepts from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). This analysis showed the complex interplay between different levels of meaning, as well as the roles played by both the immediate situational context and the broader cultural context. In particular, the analysis illustrated the crucial roles that both textual meaning (i.e. coherence and cohesion) and context play in the intelligibility of teacher talk. The broader implications of the study for research and teaching related to intercultural discourse both inside and outside the classroom are discussed.

Keywords: novice teachers of English; teacher talk; language grading; intelligibility; Cambridge CELTA

1. Introduction

The current study was inspired by a tour taken of the historic Port Arthur penal settlement in Tasmania, Australia. The tour guide, a speaker of Australian English, was explaining the history of the settlement to a group of tourists of mixed language backgrounds, and appeared to be unaware that his commentary was going over the heads of some. In a segment of the tour, the guide explains:

Now, what was situated there was the stockade, so to call it, of the barracks, and they had the hospital up the hill here. And in between the two, very conveniently located, was the flogging yard. Now I'll just talk briefly for a moment about flogging because it was a very important part of the culture here for the first, first half of the settlement only. This is because it was a military thing, flogging, and the military had been in charge here for some time and that's the way they treated their own men for discipline. Here in Port Arthur you could get a maximum of a hundred lashes. You were tied up to a wooden tripod there and stretched out like so, very tight on the back muscles. You were taken to with a cat of nine tails, a wooden-handled instrument, yay so long, with nine separate pieces of either hemp, rope or leather attached to it with little knots tied up inside each one of those pieces. And generally speaking after, and after thirty or forty lashes you'd start to get bone exposed, and beyond that you'd start to get basically a quivering mess of jelly, there, on your back.

(Excerpt from Port Arthur tour commentary, video recorded 5 Feb 2013)

In addition to his Australian accent, the tour guide's speech is full of specialized vocabulary, colloquialisms, and structural complexity. Reflection on this experience inspired the present study: if a tour guide working with international visitors seemingly had little awareness of how to 'grade' his own English for global listeners, might the same be true of teachers working with English language learners?

Teachers in English language classrooms, particularly novice teachers, may be unaware of how difficult their language use can be for their learners to understand. Even those who *are* aware of potential pitfalls may nevertheless find it challenging to adjust their language appropriately. The skill of ‘language grading’ is therefore taught on some English language teacher-education courses, and Thornbury and Watkins (2007) define language grading as ‘the way teachers simplify their classroom language in the interests of intelligibility’ (p.207). They offer the following advice:

Adjusting your language for the level of the learners you are teaching can be very difficult but is a very important teaching skill. It is important that the models you give learners remain reasonably natural because learners will pick these up. The language which it is appropriate to use with a low level class will be significantly different from the language used with a higher class, although it should remain natural. It is not necessary that learners understand every word you say (p.34).

This study investigates this issue of ‘language grading’ and examines the intelligibility of teacher talk of three trainee teachers teaching mixed nationality learners. The teachers were enrolled in a Cambridge Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) course in Australia. This setting has been chosen because pre-service TESOL teacher education courses such as CELTA are an arena in which language-grading skills are explicitly taught to novice teachers.

2. Teacher talk in the language classroom

Teacher talk is talk in which teachers engage in the classroom. It is sometimes also referred to as ‘classroom discourse’, a broader term that encompasses both teacher and student talk. Christie (2002) distinguishes two registers of teacher talk that are interwoven in patterned ways to form the fabric of classroom teaching: a regulative register (e.g. setting goals, giving instructions, sequencing tasks) and an instructional register (i.e. content being taught).

Whereas teacher talk in mainstream classrooms has been described as ‘decontextualized, complex and cognitively demanding’ (Schleppegrell, 2004, p.xi), teacher talk in language classrooms is generally characterized in terms of its simplification. Teachers ‘grade’ their language to take into account the language proficiency of their learners. These modifications have been described primarily in terms of formal categories, such as phonology, lexis and syntax. In terms of phonology, teachers make adjustments such as slowing their rate of speech and articulating more clearly by avoiding features of connected speech such as contractions, liaison and assimilation (Ivanova, 2011). Studies have also shown that teachers tend to use higher frequency vocabulary items, fewer pronouns and less complex syntactic structures (Saito & van Poeteren, 2012).

Teacher talk in the language classroom has some similarities with other forms of modified talk such as caretaker talk (the register adults use when talking to children) and foreigner talk (the register that native-speakers use when talking to non-native speakers in situations outside the classroom). Despite its similarities to other forms of modified talk, however, it is generally recognized that language classroom discourse comprises a distinct genre with distinctive rhetorical features, such as the two registers identified above by Christie, and shaped by its social purpose (e.g. Hallett, 2000). Purposes of teacher talk in the language classroom that set it apart from other kinds of talk both inside and outside the classroom are its role in modeling the target language for learners and providing input that assists them in acquiring this language.

Theorization and research on teacher talk in English-language classrooms has historically been built on the notion of the native speaker (NS) teacher as the model of proficiency to which language learners should aspire (Doherty & Singh, 2008), and teachers are often instructed to avoid the kinds of ungrammatical modifications found in foreigner talk outside the classroom (e.g. Thornbury & Watkins, 2007). In addition, teachers being trained in communicative language teaching (CLT) are instructed to make use of context to illustrate meaning and to create opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning. The application of these instructional techniques in the classroom has consequences for the discourse structure, interaction patterns, and linguistic choices in the instructional register, thus adding to the challenges that trainee teachers face in grading their language.

Little attention has been given to the difficulties that teachers may have in juggling accuracy and intelligibility. Difficulties with language grading is an issue of importance for teacher training, and ultimately also has broader potential implications for communication in settings outside the classroom as well.

3. Theoretical perspectives

Broadly, we distinguish three theoretical perspectives in scholarship on teacher talk in the language classroom: the input perspective, the intelligibility perspective, and the interaction perspective. The input perspective views teacher talk in terms of whether it provides comprehensible input for the purpose of language acquisition; the intelligibility perspective views teacher talk in terms of whether it can be understood; and the interaction perspective views classroom interactions between teachers and students in terms of their broader social and pedagogical dimensions. The brief overview below focuses only on the first two perspectives, as these are most relevant to the current study, which focuses on teacher discourse only. For teacher talk research with an interactional perspective, see Thornbury (1996), Walsh (2002), and Gibbons (2003).

The input perspective, which dominated research in the 1980s, was strongly influenced by Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis on the development of learners' interlanguage. This hypothesis stated that for learners to develop from their current level of interlanguage (stage *i*) to a higher level (stage *i + 1*) learners needed to be exposed to input that contains *i + 1*. Krashen made a distinction between roughly tuned and finely tuned input, and emphasized that 'natural, communicative, roughly-tuned, comprehensible input' was preferable to 'finely-tuned input that aims directly at *i + 1*.' Thus, Krashen believed that in order to comprehend the teacher, learners did not need to understand every word and that teachers could make use of contextual information and world knowledge to support comprehension. Apart from describing modifications that teachers make to their discourse, research carried out within this perspective has also examined areas such as whether input modifications lead to language acquisition (e.g. Loschky, 1994), the aspects of input modification most critical to comprehension (e.g. Parker & Chaudron, 1987) and factors affecting learners' attention to teacher talk (e.g. Wang, 2015).

The intelligibility perspective focuses on the extent to which speakers of different varieties of English, including NS varieties, can make themselves intelligible to listeners beyond their own language variety, including learners of English as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL). This perspective has its origins in World Englishes scholarship that examines the cross-varietal intelligibility of Englishes and the speech accommodation that takes place when speakers of different varieties of English communicate. Initially, this scholarship focused predominantly on

pronunciation, and in particular, accent. However, the focus was broadened by scholars such as Smith (1992) and Nelson (2011), who developed a tripartite intelligibility framework. This framework distinguishes three aspects of intelligibility: intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability. Somewhat confusingly, as well as referring to the superordinate term, intelligibility is also a category in the framework that refers to the decoding of the phonology of words and utterances, including recognizing boundaries, distinguishing combinations of sounds, and word and sentence stress patterns. This latter meaning of intelligibility is sometimes referred to as ‘phonological intelligibility’ (Berns, 2008). Comprehensibility refers to understanding propositional meaning, and interpretability refers to understanding speakers’ communicative intentions, that is, the illocutionary force underlying utterances. The notion of interpretability encompasses semantics and speech acts, but does not appear to cover aspects of textual meaning such as coherence and cohesion, nor to consider the role of context and culture in understanding utterances.

Underlying this framework is the view that intelligibility, in the superordinate sense, is not an absolute quality imbued in any variety of English (including native Englishes), but rather is relative to the variety of English, whether native or non-native, of both the speaker and listener. Whereas in the input perspective the value of the NS teacher as an idealized source of comprehensible input was emphasized, the intelligibility perspective raises questions regarding the value of NS teacher talk. These questions pertain to issues such as the localized nature of NSs’ knowledge of English and to their perceived lack of knowledge of learners’ cultures and the values and experiences that learners are likely to have (Doherty & Singh, 2008).

Research in this perspective has primarily looked at speech accommodation of NSs and non-NSs outside the classroom, and there has so far been little focus on teachers’ attempts at language grading in classrooms. However, Doherty and Singh (2008) conducted a critical examination of NS teacher talk in which they identified aspects of NS teacher talk that are likely to be difficult for English language learners to understand. They looked at shifts in the discourse, referred to as frames, including shifts between regulatory and instructional registers and shifts within the instructional register. Two main areas of difficulty identified were unclear or overly frequent discourse shifts and unnecessary syntactic complexity in question phrasing. This analysis provided insights about issues in teacher talk that could *potentially* impact on intelligibility, but did not provide evidence concerning whether these *actually* impacted on learners’ understanding. The analysis specifically focused on discourse structure, but did not consider other issues that may impact intelligibility. The current study takes learners’ perceptions of the intelligibility of teacher talk as its starting point, and provides a holistic framework for analyzing issues related to intelligibility.

4. The current study

The current study is a qualitative study that uses data from two sources to examine the difficulties that novice English language teachers have with grading their teacher talk to make it understandable to their mixed language background learners. It examines focus group discussions with learners about difficulties in understanding recorded teacher talk, and provides textual analyses of the same teacher talk to obtain further insights into the features that are involved in this lack of understanding.

The recorded classroom vignettes discussed in this paper were identified by learners as being difficult for them to understand, and we give voice to the learners by examining their perceptions of what was difficult about the teacher talk and why. The researchers then extend the students’ critiques by analyzing the same vignettes. Thus,

the study includes both learners' voices and researchers' voices in examining why specific examples of teacher talk are difficult to understand.

We take an intelligibility perspective in which we view language grading by teachers in the language classroom as a form of speech accommodation. Within this, we view the English language classroom as a particular kind of international English setting with a distinctive pedagogical purpose. We posit that just as the Port Arthur tour guide situation warrants an 'international' English, so do many English-language classrooms where the students' objective is to acquire English for international communication. However, 'grading' their own language towards such an 'international' English may be challenging for teachers, particularly novice ones.

In contrast to much previous research that has taken the native-speaker as the gold standard, the current study challenges the dominant language-learning paradigm of NS-as-language-expert and NNS-as-novice by re-positioning NNSs as evaluators of NS teacher talk, and also by critically examining the teacher talk of novice teachers who are native-speakers. However, we acknowledge that NNS teachers may also find it challenging to grade their English for learners. We also acknowledge that the very notion of 'nativeness' is highly contested linguistically and politically (e.g. Holliday, 2006). It is not within the scope of this paper to contribute to the discussion of who is or is not a 'native speaker' or debate at length whether the term is meaningful or legitimate; for a book-length study of these questions, see Davies (2003). The term 'native speaker' is used here, tentatively, as it remains 'the ghost in the machine' of English language teaching (Cook, 2016, p. 187). This is to say that the ELT profession remains powerfully divided by this problematic binary. In this paper we do not intend to reinscribe this binary but to reflect, as Cook, Holliday, Davies, and others do, that it still very much divides ELT classrooms and staffrooms. For the purposes of this study, then, we employ a working definition of a native speaker as someone who has spoken a language from earliest childhood and whose education has been undertaken in that language. The teachers in this study all learned British, Australian, or North American English (and only English) from early childhood, and were educated entirely in English. Unlike some writers (e.g. Jenkins, 2006) we do not conflate nativeness with monolingualism, although the 'native-speakers' in this study *are* either monolingual users of English or are English-dominant bilinguals whose additional language/s were acquired after childhood.

Specifically, the three teachers whose work is discussed in this paper are Monica, Julian, and Cindy (all pseudonyms), who are originally from the UK, Australia, and the USA respectively. All were living in Sydney at the time of the CELTA course. Cindy and Julian are also users of French and Spanish respectively, with both having acquired second languages in adulthood: Cindy lived in Belgium for several years and Julian speaks some Spanish at home with his Peruvian wife. Monica, on the other hand, calls herself monolingual.

The vignettes analyzed in this study are from the lead-in stage of lessons taught by trainee teachers as part of their CELTA course. A prototypical CLT lesson starts with what Scrivener (2011) terms a 'lead-in' before the target language or text/topic for macro skills development is presented. This lead-in is intended to create a communicative context for the presentation of new target-language items so that learners can more clearly see the meaning and use of these items or, in the case of macro-skills lessons, the lead-in segues into the topic, to engage learners' interest and activate relevant schemata. The language in the lead-in is graded to students' proficiency level, and teachers support and check students' understandings, for example by using visuals, realia, mime and gesture, and/or elicitation techniques.

4.1 Theoretical framework

In this study, we define intelligibility as the degree to which listeners can make sense of spoken discourse in a manner that appears to approximate the speaker's intended meaning. We deliberately express ourselves tentatively in relation to the speakers' intended meanings in the classroom vignettes, as direct evidence of the speakers' intending meanings is lacking.

We aim to provide a comprehensive framework for the analysis of understandability in spoken discourse. Whereas the Nelson and Smith intelligibility framework is based on formal categories: phonology (intelligibility), grammar and lexis (comprehensibility) and pragmatics (interpretability), our proposed framework takes a functional approach, using key concepts from SFL. This captures aspects of intelligibility missing in the Nelson and Smith framework that are related to coherence, cohesion, contextual knowledge, and broader cultural knowledge. It also enables us to illustrate the interplay between these different aspects of discourse in contributing to lack of understanding.

SFL makes a distinction between context of situation and context of culture. According to Halliday and Hasan (1985), context of situation is the immediate situational context surrounding a text, and context of culture is the broader cultural background against which a text is interpreted. While the notion of 'culture' is much contested, we draw upon Scollon et al's (2012, p.3) definition:

[A] way of dividing people up into groups according to some feature of these people which help us to understand something about them and how they are different from or similar to other people.

This means that culture is expressed in the attitudes, behaviors, and meanings that are common to a particular group, and that group identity is based on putative homogeneity in characteristics that may include, for example, ethnicity or professional affiliation. In this study, the notions of context of situation and context of culture will be employed to assist in explaining why some elements of the teacher talk may be difficult to understand.

SFL distinguishes ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions (Halliday, 1985). The ideational metafunction refers to those resources that represent the world and both our outer and inner experiences in the world. Inner experiences include beliefs and abstract ideas. Experiences are encoded in language through lexical meanings and grammatical relationships within the clause, as well as syntactic relations between clauses¹. The interpersonal function refers to those resources that represent the relationship between the addressor and the addressee, including mood, modality and lexis that evaluates people, objects and situations. The textual metafunction refers to those resources that manage the flow of discourse. Through the textual metafunction, meanings are combined into a coherent whole. The resources associated with the textual metafunction include discourse structure, referred to as schematic structure; information structure (i.e. theme/rheme), which refers to the order of information in clauses and how this is patterned throughout the discourse, and cohesive devices such as referencing, and conjunctions. See Halliday (1985) for a fuller description. In this study, we use these metafunctions as the broad basis of a

¹ SFL divides ideational meaning into experiential meaning, in which Transitivity plays a key role (i.e. the processes expressed in clauses, such as who is doing what to whom), and logical meaning, which concerns logical relations between clauses. However, these distinctions are not explicitly incorporated into the framework of the current study, as it goes beyond the scope of the study to provide detailed explanations or analyses of these specific ideational sub-systems.

taxonomy that allows us to analyze aspects of teacher talk that are difficult to understand. The framework used is shown in table 1.

Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context of culture • Context of situation
Ideational meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lexical complexity • Grammatical complexity
Interpersonal meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mood • Modality • Evaluative lexis
Textual meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schematic structure • Cohesion • Information structure

Table 1: Framework for analyzing intelligibility

4.2 Participants and setting

This study was conducted on a ten-week CELTA course in Sydney, Australia from August to October 2013. The institution that runs the CELTA offers free English lessons two evenings per week, and students are aware that their teachers are still in training. Teaching practice on CELTA is thus conducted with ‘real’ language students (as opposed to peer ‘teaching’, as on some pre-service ELT courses). The adult students, whose English-language proficiency ranged from pre-intermediate to upper intermediate, were from a variety of countries: a majority were Japanese, Korean, or Chinese, and a few were Brazilian, Colombian, or Italian. Most students were young adults and most were in Australia temporarily. Most of the Korean, Japanese, and Italian students were on Working Holiday visas (WHVs), undertaking extended sojourns in Australia comprising paid work (often in hospitality), some English studies, and tourism. Some students, primarily those from China, were the partners of student-visa holders, often those undertaking research degrees. And a few students, primarily Colombians and Brazilians (who are ineligible for Australian WHVs) were on student visas and undertaking daytime studies, usually in business colleges. Because of students’ demographics and motivations, we would describe this particular setting as an EFL rather than an ESL (English as a Second Language) setting: most students’ purpose was to acquire English for wider international communication rather than to settle longer term in Australia.

Lessons of five trainee teachers were recorded, but vignettes from only three teachers’ lessons are discussed in this paper. These particular vignettes were chosen because they showcase different language grading issues and because NNS students described them as difficult for them to understand.

4.3 Data collection

The participant trainee teachers consented to having three of their teaching practice lessons recorded at early, mid and late stages of the CELTA course (n=3 hours of teaching per trainee; 15 hours’ video recording in total), and all were interviewed after each lesson and asked to reflect on their efforts at grading their English. Phiona conducted all classroom observations/recordings and interviews, and she made notes during the lessons as to where students seemed to be having difficulties in understanding. After the end of the CELTA course, Phiona re-watched the classroom videos and selected 18 free-standing teacher-talk segments that were then edited together to form a seventeen-minute ‘highlights reel’ video. The chosen segments

according to the researcher's notes were all those in which the students in class had appeared to struggle in some way and/or that the trainee teachers had identified as problematic in post-lesson interviews. In this video, transitions were marked onscreen as 'Teacher 1, lesson 1', 'Teacher 2, lesson 1', and so on, but no other contextualizing information and no subtitles were provided. No video editing (e.g. fuzzing out teachers' faces or adding subtitles) occurred before students were shown the video. The teachers in the video had all given permission for undisguised recordings of their teaching to be used in the study.

Six focus groups, each lasting about two hours, were then organized with volunteer learners whose English proficiency ranged from pre-intermediate to advanced. Each group comprised 5-7 students (total n=37 students), none of whom had been in the original lessons. These participants were studying English at different language centers around Sydney, not in the CELTA institution. This was for ethical reasons, as the students were asked to evaluate teacher talk and this necessarily produced some deficit discourses about the trainee teachers. All but one of these groups comprised same-first-language speakers (i.e. two groups of Japanese students, two groups of Brazilian students, one group of Chinese students, and one mixed-nationality, higher-level group comprising two students from Korea and one each from France, Slovakia, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, and Colombia). The mixed nationality group used English as their *lingua franca*.

Qualified, commercially hired interpreters were provided to all but the mixed nationality group. Each group was shown the 17-minute highlight reel and asked to comment, in English or through interpreters as they preferred, on: 1. Exactly what they had understood of each segment of the recording and 2. What was easy or difficult to understand about the segment, and (if they could articulate it), why? The rationale was to access learners' own perceptions rather than imposing researchers' sense of what 'should' be easy or difficult for 'them' to understand.

In most cases, the learners chose to communicate directly in English with the researcher who conducted the focus groups. The researcher's questions, (e.g. 'what did you understand? Was it easy or difficult? Why?') were deliberately 'graded' so as to minimize the impact of using interpreters. However, in all groups, some learners asked interpreters for help with translating individual words and phrases into English. There were also a few exchanges where the researcher asked for clarification, necessitating some back and forth communication via the interpreter to clarify what exactly the learner had intended to say. Although there is no absolute certainty that these translations fully captured students' intended meanings accurately, the researcher who conducted the focus group has an understanding of Portuguese (the language of two Brazilian groups), and so was able to check that the students' original utterances were very close in meaning and nuance to the English versions. This provided some evidence for the accuracy of the interpretations.

In each focus group, the interviewer paused the video recording after each segment to allow students to comment. Students were also given a second remote control and asked to pause the recording when there was something on which they wished to comment. There was much negotiation between the students as to what the teachers' intended meanings on the video were, and there was a broad consensus between groups as to which teachers/segments were generally clearer or more opaque.

These focus groups were audio-recorded and the students' English-language contributions and the interpreters' English-language renderings of some students' L1 commentaries) were then transcribed. The three vignettes chosen for analysis in this paper were all segments of the lead in parts of lessons that students found confusing

and/or difficult to follow, although their reasons varied. Lead ins were chosen as the the researchers' notes and the focus group discussion had shown it was often this part of the lesson that students found difficult to understand. The three vignettes of lead ins were chosen by the researchers to showcase a range of issues that, together, illustrate our proposed framework of language grading components.

The focus group interviews provided information on *what* the students perceived as easy or difficult, often including students' perceptions of *why* this was the case. Most students articulated reasons they perceived a given segment was difficult to understand and there were plenty of suggestions for improvement, often in critical terms of what the trainee teachers 'should' do, or 'could do better'. However, none of the students are linguists. While their reflections are a useful starting point for unpacking and analyzing the teacher-talk texts, we take their initial analyses further in this paper by also providing a textual analysis of the three teacher talk vignettes. Thus the analysis of the teacher-talk presented here draws upon and also extends the students' critiques.

The data management for this project also included making the three vignettes analyzed in this paper available for readers. This entailed adding subtitles for clarity (at times there are sound issues, as the recordings were made in busy classrooms in which students were moving around. This of course affected students' comprehension too, both in the live classrooms and subsequent video-viewing focus groups). It was also necessary, for inclusion in this paper, to split the videos into stand-alone segments and to 'fuzz' out the teachers' faces, for the ethical reason of anonymity. For the same reason, participant institutions are not identified and all participant names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

4.4. Data analysis

For the analysis, both the student focus group discussions and the teacher talk vignettes were transcribed. Excerpts of the focus group discussions and full transcriptions of the teacher talk vignettes are provided in the results. The vignettes were transcribed using the transcription system shown in Table 2. The vignettes have been divided into rhetorical stages that reflect the schematic structure, and these stages are indicated with numbers and letters (e.g. 1a, 1b.).

In the analysis of the focus groups, features of the teacher talk that students reported as difficult to understand were identified through content analysis. This means that where students' comments on teachers' intelligibility were negative, their reasons were coded to produce an inductive understanding of the *types* of issues that they identified. These are described under each of the lesson-segment headings below. In the textual analysis of the teacher talk transcripts, the framework shown in table 2 is used to categorize those features in the teacher talk identified by the researchers to be of a high level of semantic or grammatical complexity. These features were identified by the researchers, as the focus groups made general statements about the trainee teachers' intelligibility rather than pointing out specific features in the teacher talk that they found difficult. For each of the three vignettes, a full transcript with contextualizing information is provided, followed by the students' perspectives, and then our analysis, which builds on the students' perspectives.

bold	ideational meaning;
<i>italics</i>	interpersonal meaning;
<u>underlined</u>	textual meaning;
numbering ₁	reference chains
(.)	pause
()	non-verbal cues are provided in round brackets
[inaudible]	inaudible utterances are provided in square brackets
CAPITAL	speech that is noticeably louder than the surrounding speech
> <	more rapid talk

Table 2: Transcription system

5. Results

5.1 Monica, *Holidays*

Monica sets the scene for an upper intermediate lesson by using three photos to elicit a pair-work discussion on students' preferred holidays. However, the photos are not very clear, resulting in teacher talk in which Monica deals with the lack of clarity of the photos.

Monica: 1a okay so *I'd like you to* look at these pictures_{1a} (.) (gestures at pictures projected on whiteboard) 1b and (.) *I'd like you to* discuss with the person next to you (.) (picks up notes on desk) 1c **which of these holidays in the photos**_{1b} **appeals to you the most** and why (.) (reads from notes, then looks at class and then gestures at pictures on whiteboard) 1d so *if you could talk to* the person next to you **after looking at them**_{1c} **if you can't see** (.) (waves with hand, then puts notes back on desk, then gestures at photos again) 2a **it**_{1d} **did come out better** before (.) (shifts position of photos on Overhead Projector (OHP) slightly) 3a this one is a mountain scene this one's a beach (.) (points at two photos on whiteboard) 2b it's **hard to tell** (.)
 Students: [inaudible] (Laughter)
 Monica: 2c it's really **hard to tell** **I** (.) **thought it**_{1e} **would come out better but it**_{1f} **didn't** (.) (goes back and forth between the OHP and the whiteboard) 3b this one is *more like* a (.) (points at photo then goes back to OHP to check the photo)
 Student: [Inaudible]
 Monica: 3c *I think* it is someone looking at some **natives** so *it's supposed to be like* (.) *perhaps* somewhere in the mountains *some kind of* backpacker trip (.) (goes back and forth between the OHP and the whiteboard) 3d and this one is someone exploring a **glacier** so it's very cold (.) (points at third photo, and then returns to OHP to adjust photo) 3e so *I think* beach, mountain and this is an adventure trip (.) (looks at whiteboard, and points to each of the three photos in turn) 1e okay so *if you could talk to* the person next to you (.)

5.1.1 Student perspective

Students commented favorably on Monica's varied intonation but made comments about her rate of speech, such as that she 'connects more the words' (Japanese female, group 2, in English), that 'she always continues' (Brazilian male, group 5, via interpreter) and that she 'moves very quickly' (Chinese female, group 3, via interpreter). Effects on understanding were described as follows:

- Swiss female: If you stop, if you don't understand one word and you stop [understanding], and after it's gone. The train is out.
 Czech male: Yep.
 Researcher: So the train's going too fast?

Czech male: You're right.
Swiss female: You can't catch it.

(Student focus group 6, original in English)

Other phonological intelligibility issues mentioned were that Monica turned her back while speaking and that her hair sometimes obscured her face.

No students mentioned difficulties with grammar or lexical items, and although many agreed that the photocopied pictures were unclear, they appreciated that Monica apologized for this. Paradoxically, however, the students reported that Monica's apology for the picture quality had a negative effect on textual meaning:

If you talk about, say, a holiday and in that context talk about mountain or the sea, one makes the connection, one understands. But if you do get other concepts in then one is lost completely. ... She's talking about the holidays but she's also talking about the paper or something. If you're explaining something, you close the [first] topic. Then start [the next one]. That's how my brain works.

(Brazilian female, Group 5, via interpreter)

5.1.2 Researcher perspective

The unclear pictures impede Monica in establishing a clear context of situation, and lead her to engage in teacher talk that was otherwise unnecessary. As the Brazilian student cited above points out, this teacher talk contains confusing shifts. The schematic structure shows that that discourse shifts back and forth between three registers: a regulatory register (1a- 1e) in which Monica gives instructions to the students; a commentative register (2a, -2c) in which Monica verbalizes her internal thoughts concerning the lack of clarity of the photos; and an instructional register (3a – 3e) in which she compensates for the lack of clarity by describing the photos to the students. The commentative register and the instructional register are both embedded in the regulatory register. Both the start of the regulatory register in 1a and the resumption of this in 1e are marked by the discourse marker 'OK'. However, the back and forth shifts between instructional and commentative registers are not clearly marked. Although there are pauses at the shifts between the instructional and commentative registers, these pauses are not distinguishable from pauses that occur within each of these two registers, and no discourse markers or non-verbal signals are provided. Moreover, back and forth movements by Monica between the OHP and the whiteboard within each of these registers create a complex pattern of physical shifts that serve to accentuate the choppiness of the discourse.

Each of the three registers also contains complex interpersonal expressions of modality, which may impact on the understandability of each. In the instructional register, modal expressions are used for politeness; in the internal register they are used to express conditionality, and in the instructional register they are used to express uncertainty about what is depicted in the photos. The requests in the instructional register in 1d could have been simplified to something like: 'Look at the photos. Talk to the person next to you about...'.

Each of the three registers also contains complex ideational meanings. In the regulatory register, the question that Monica asks the students to discuss is embedded in a subordinate clause, although there is a pause between the main and subordinate clause (1b). The embedded question contains the verb 'appeals to', instead of a simpler verb such as 'like' or 'prefer'. In the instructional register, many words are used to convey the meaning of the three pictures, which if they had been clear, should, themselves, have been sufficient to illustrate meaning. The use of the words 'glacier'

and ‘natives’ may also be unfamiliar to the students, not least as ‘natives’ has limited usage due to its negative connotative meaning.

In the commentative register, complex ideational and textual meanings intertwine. Firstly, ‘it did come out better’ (2 a) and ‘it’s hard to tell’ (2b) are used respectively as ideational grammatical metaphors for “it was clearer” and ‘it’s hard to see the photos clearly’. Secondly, there is a shift in 2a from the students as agent in to the photos as agent. In terms of textual meaning, this shift is complicated by a lack of cohesiveness in the reference chain for the photos that starts in 1a. In the regulatory register, the chain has plural nominal referential terms (i.e. these pictures (1a), the photos (1c)), but in the commentative register singular pronominal references are used (i.e. ‘it’ in 2a and 2c). It is also complicated by the elision of the relative clause ‘what the photos show’ in ‘it’s hard to tell’ (2b, 2c).

5.2 Julian, *The Folder*

Julian sets the scene in this lower intermediate lesson, in which students are asked to discuss the question: ‘What things do you never leave home without?’ He illustrates the meaning of ‘to never leave home without something’ by acting out a scene in which he gets on a bus and then realizes that he has left his folder at home. Julian then gives the students instructions for the pair-work discussion.

Julian: 1a every day I do a little bit of work on my English (.) (*standing in middle of classroom*) 2a the other day (.) (*walks across classroom and picks up bag at front of classroom*) 2b I got on the bus with my bag (.) (*walks across classroom holding bag, mimes getting on bus*) 2c sat down pulled out (.) (*mimes sitting down and opening bag*) 2d I didn't have my folder ₁ (.) (*slaps his head in frustration*) 2e oh my God (.) (*turns around towards desk*) 2f it₁ was back on my desk at home (.) (*points to a folder on the classroom desk*) 3a so now every day I put this folder ₁ in this bag that's where it₁ lives (.) (*walks over to desk and starts to put folder in the bag, but doesn't actually put it in*) 3b **I never leave home without it₁** okay (.) (*holds folder up and then puts it on the desk again*) 4a in pairs(.) (*makes a circling gesture with arms*) 4b talk about (.) **what things do you never leave home without** (.) 4c okay? (.) (*turns on OHP to show question: What things do you never leave home without?*) 4d in pairs in pairs and you three together (*walks around gesturing to place students in pairs*)

5.2.1 Student perspective

Some student groups discussed this segment at length, all saying they found it quite difficult to understand. One student mentioned phonological intelligibility issues, commenting on Julian’s flat intonation. Almost all groups grasped the idea that Julian had ‘forgotten something at home’ (Brazilian female, group 5, in English). However, several students said that their understanding came mainly from paralinguistic information: many said they appreciated Julian’s mime with his empty bag and his facial expression. For example:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Japanese Female: | [Interpreted] Just a little bit, I understood a little bit. |
| Researcher: | What did you understand? |
| Japanese Female: | [Interpreted] He forgot something at home. |
| Researcher: | Very good. |
| Japanese Female: | [Interpreted] Is that right? |
| Researcher: | That's right. How did you understand this? |

Japanese Female: [Interpreted] So because of the gesture and he has a bag and they're talking about - talking something with the bag and things, that's why.

(Japanese female, group 1, via interpreter)

However, at least one student (Japanese male, group 2, via interpreter) did not know what it was that Julian had left behind, and group 6 (mixed group) joked that it was strange that something as large as a full folder could be so easily forgotten. Students appeared to have grasped the concept of leaving something behind but only two groups, both after re-watching the excerpt, were able to state the task ('discuss things you never leave home without'). One student queried whether the task was about 'going home' (Japanese group 1, via interpreter). No students commented unprompted on the task setup and all focused on the story of having left something at home.

5.2.2 Researcher perspective

Julian has difficulty establishing a clear context of situation, as the story, which is a personal recount, that he acts out in moves 1-3 illustrates 'to leave something at home', but does not illustrate 'to never leave home without something'. This mismatch may explain why some of the learners failed to grasp that the focus of the vignette was supposed to be the latter expression. This mismatch is compounded by the complexity of the expression, which is an ideational grammatical metaphor, the underlying meaning of which is 'I always take it with me'. As the expression was not the point of the lesson, it appears that the simpler it 'I always take it with me' would have sufficed.

Textual meaning also seems to be a source of complexity in the discourse. At face value, the schematic structure seems relatively straightforward. The structure involves a shift from instructional (moves 1-3) to regulatory register (move 4), in which the task instructions are given, and this shift is clearly marked by the discourse marker 'ok'. The internal structure of the story, which is a recount, is quite typical: Move 1 is the orientation, move 2 is the events, and move 3 is the evaluation, and this structure involves shifts between present tense (moves 1 and 3) and past tense (move 2). However, the shifts within the recount involve complex interweaving of verbal and non-verbal information.

Firstly, these shifts involve profound changes in deixis. Throughout move 2 and in move 3a the desk at the front of the classroom represents home, with the area in the middle of the classroom representing the bus. However, the audience is not made aware of this deictic relationship between the desk and home until move 2f. Moreover, somewhere in move 3a, the desk ceases to represent home. Julian mimes putting the folder in the bag, but does not actually put it in, which represents a mismatch with his words in 3a, in which he claims that the folder is always in his bag. Even more confusingly in 3b, Julian states that he never leaves home without the folder, yet at the same time, he places the folder on the desk, which in the previous utterance, represented home.

Secondly, both verbal and non-verbal information contribute to lack of cohesiveness in the referential relationships relating to 'folder'. Although the folder is central to the recount, it is not introduced into the discourse until move 2d. Although it is introduced with a nominal antecedent 'my folder', the meaning of folder is not illustrated until move 2f, when Julian gestures to the folder on the desk. However, this illustration of meaning is coupled with the pronominal reference 'it' rather than a nominal reference. This could explain why one of the students says that he doesn't know what Julian left at home. It would have been better to introduce the folder into

the discourse in the orientation of the recount in move 1a. In the orientation, Julian states that he does a little bit of work on his English every day. The inference is that the folder is therefore important, but this is not explicitly stated. The statement is also confusing, as it is unclear why an English teacher would need to work on his English every day. It may be that Julian has tried to find a simple way to express the idea, that the folder, which contains his CELTA notes, is important for his current CELTA studies.

5.3 Cindy, *Study Abroad*

In this lead-in to an upper intermediate lesson, Cindy introduces two cutout doll characters, Tom and Kate, who are young British people moving to Australia. Cindy uses the characters to elicit the vocabulary items 'study abroad' and 'emigrate'. She then provides instructions for a group discussion on the type of person you need to be to emigrate or study abroad. She attempts without success to elicit vocabulary about personal qualities from the students, and then herself provides an example of a personal quality, 'courage'.

Cindy: 1a so I'm going to start with a little story (.) 2a first of all this is Tom (.) (holds up male paper doll) 2b and Tom is currently living in the UK (.) (pins Tom on whiteboard, next to map of UK) 2c but he hears about a program to go to university in Australia for six months (.) 2d so now Tom is going to (.) in Australia (.) (moves cutout doll across whiteboard to map of Australia. Pauses mid-sentence and uses gestures to try and elicit 'study abroad') 3a who can fill in the sentence for me? What is Tom going to do in Australia? (.) (points to Tom on whiteboard)

Student: study

Cindy: 3b [inaudible] (twirling gesture with hand to elicit further responses)

Student: [inaudible]

Cindy: 3c that's good 4a >**I was looking for 'study abroad' but that is even better cause that's what he's doing**< (makes rapid hand gestures and body movements) 2e so Tom is going to study abroad in Australia (.) 2f and next Kate is also living in the UK (.) (pins Tom on whiteboard, next to map of UK) 2g but she's sick of the rain and the cold weather (.) 2h so she decides to move permanently to Australia (.) (moves cutout doll across whiteboard to map of Australia) 2i so Kate is going to (.) (Pauses and points to Kate on whiteboard to try and elicit 'emigrate')

Students: emigrate (in unison)

Cindy: 3d perfect (.) 3e move permanently (.) 5a so now in your groups (.) just take one minute (.) and discuss (.) what type of person you have to be to emigrate or study abroad (.) (moves hands towards each other to indicate forming groups; points at each doll) 5b go ahead and discuss (.) 6a *can anybody else tell me what type of qualities make up the type of person that is willing to pack up and move* (.) 6b *so we're looking for specific qualities do you have anything* (.) 6c okay maybe you have to be **courageous**, you have to **have courage to do it, to go out on your own?** (.) 6d *anything else like that?*

5.3.1 Student Perspective

This excerpt prompted a lot of discussion among the students, with opinion divided as to whether Cindy's accent, which most recognized as 'different', rather than as American, made for easier or more difficult listening. Some groups identified pace as an issue, saying Cindy sometimes spoke too fast. Some students took the discussion

further than phonological intelligibility, with one group teasing out that the teacher talk seemed to be scripted and unresponsive:

- French male: In my point of view, she's not really patient. With some groups, you have to dig a little bit and try to ask–
- Swiss female: –and make sure that the people is attending to you, are understanding.
- Czech male: Yeah, she cannot feel the feedback from students.
- Several voices: Yeah.
- Swiss female: That's what I was going to say. She's not worried in having the feedback.
- Czech male: She got the presentation–
- French male: She's only worried in, teach, to do all the exercise, or maybe following–
- Swiss female: It's automatic.
- French male: –the plan she had in her mind. So she's not even–
- Czech male: It's a presentation.
- Swiss female: You know telemarketing? It's like that. ...
- French male: Yeah, she's thinking to do a well job, but at the end it's not a good job because –for me it's not a good job, sorry.
- (Student focus group 6, original in English)

While students praised the visual support offered by the cutout dolls as supporting understanding, all seemed to think that the segment was about going abroad and reasons for going abroad (e.g. ‘don’t like the weather’, Japanese male, group 2, original in English). No student groups mentioned the discussion-of-characteristics task, suggesting that overall understanding was limited.

5.3.2 Researcher perspective

Issues surrounding both context of situation and context of culture appear to play an important role in this vignette. In terms of structure, the vignette can be divided into two sections: moves 1, 2, 3 and 4 relate to elicitation of ‘study abroad’ and ‘emigrate’ using the cutout doll story, and moves 5 and 6 relate to the introduction of the ‘personal qualities’ discussion topic. As was pointed out by the students, the cut out doll story in the first section illustrated the meaning of the intended vocabulary quite clearly. However, it did not assist in creating a context of situation for the discussion in the second section, which was the actual task. Cindy appears to have misjudged what students find difficult to understand. She uses the story to illustrate vocabulary that is likely to already be familiar to these upper intermediate students, yet underestimates the difficulty of the discussion topic. Without an appropriate context of situation, even though the vocabulary in the discussion question in 5a is not difficult, no discussion ensues.

Context of culture appears to manifest itself in the ethnocentric notion of emigration that Cindy presents as a privileged life choice easily made in response to irksome aspects of life such as bad weather (2f-h). This is ‘culture’ in the sense of ‘small cultures’ (Holliday, 2010), that is, the intersectional nexus of an individual’s identity markers including nationality but also e.g. social class, economic status, level of education, profession, etc (see Stanley, 2017, pp.21-35).

In this simplistic presentation of a complex notion, Cindy considers neither the multitude of complex factors that might influence someone to emigrate, nor the realities of visa restrictions and practical difficulties. Further, the upheaval and turmoil that may be involved in emigration are not mentioned, although these would

preface the ‘personal characteristics’ task much more effectively than the paper dolls. She also fails to connect with her students’ own life experiences relating to their sojourn in Australia, or other countries. Moreover, the juxtaposition of studying abroad and emigration in Cindy’s question in 5a seems somewhat incongruous, as the two situations seem to be so different. Lack of consideration of context of culture may thus have contributed to Cindy’s lack of success in starting the discussion.

When Cindy realizes that the students are finding the discussion topic difficult, she switches from regulatory register (i.e. giving the instructions) in move 5 back to instructional register in move 6 to elicit qualities from the students. This shift back to instructional register is accompanied by a marked increase in the complexity of the teacher talk. When Cindy unexpectedly finds herself needing to elaborate on the discussion topic, this unplanned teacher talk becomes a complex maze of ideational and interpersonal meanings. When she rephrases the discussion in 6b the interpersonal and ideational choices are more complex than in the original formulation in 5a. Similarly, when courageous is given in 6c as an example, it is defined in terms of a derivation of the word itself (i.e. courage) and also in terms of an idiomatic expression (i.e. ‘to go out on your own’). In move 4, which represents a shift to commentative register in which Cindy articulates her pedagogical objectives in eliciting the vocabulary, we also see a high level of syntactic complexity, plus an unusually fast rate of speech.

6. Discussion

The current study has examined the teacher talk of novice teachers from a critical intelligibility perspective, in which, rather than taking native-speaker teacher talk as the gold standard and describing its features, we have examined issues in the intelligibility of teachers’ own talk (rather than issues with students’ listening skills), revealing difficulties that teachers appeared to have in grading their language appropriately. We have examined these issues through both a student perspective provided by the focus group discussions and a researcher perspective provided by the analysis of the spoken classroom discourse.

The focus group analysis showed that many of the students were unable to follow the main ideas that the teachers were attempting to convey. For each vignette issues related to phonological intelligibility, such as fast rate of speech, unclear articulation, and flat intonation patterns were identified. This corroborates the findings of previous research regarding the importance of teachers’ phonological intelligibility (e.g. Ivanova, 2011). However, for each vignette some of the students went further in explaining why the teacher talk was difficult to understand. In *Holidays*, student identified the back and forth shifts in the discourse as a source of difficulty. In *The Folder*, they indicated that gestures were helpful in supporting understanding, but that they could not connect the gestures and the words; and in *Study Abroad* they identified that the teachers’ lack of connection with students contributed to lack of understanding.

The analysis of the teacher discourse using a framework based on key concepts from SFL allowed us to go further by unraveling complexities in the interwoven strands of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. In *Holidays*, textual and interpersonal meanings were shown to be intertwined: the analysis revealed that back and forth shifts in the discourse, such as those identified by Doherty and Singh (2008), involved three distinct registers, and that each register contained complex interpersonal meanings. In *The Folder*, the interplay between textual and ideational meanings was prominent: the use of mime in telling a story

involved complex deictic shifts in spatial relationships and combinations of verbal and non-verbal cues that impeded the teacher in illustrating the meaning of key words and expressions. In *Study Abroad*, in trying to explain the discussion topic of personal qualities, the teacher became enmeshed in tangled strands of complex ideational and interpersonal meanings.

In addition, the notions of context of situation and context of culture in our framework allowed us to illustrate the role of both the immediate situational context and the broader cultural context in the teacher talk; to reiterate, 'culture' is defined much more broadly than nationality and is taken to also incorporate other social markers such as class and generation, as these powerfully inform how speakers understand the world. For each of the three vignettes, problems in establishing a context of situation appeared to be at the heart of difficulties in understanding. In *The Folder & Study Abroad*, the contexts that were established did not adequately prepare students for the tasks they were instructed to complete, as the meanings that were illustrated that were not central to these tasks. In addition, use of classroom techniques to create a context appeared to impact negatively on intelligibility. In *Holidays*, lack of clarity in the visual aids triggered a seemingly unplanned cascade of teacher talk that threatened to drown the listeners. In *The Folder*, while gestures supported understanding, mismatch between words and gestures resulted in intelligibility issues. In *Study Abroad*, the use of cut out dolls as realia contributed to over- simplification of the concept of emigration.

The role of context of culture was also illustrated in *Study Abroad*, as the concept of emigration was presented in a culture-bound way that did not build a bridge to the students' life experiences or knowledge of the world. The role of culture in intelligibility has been pointed out by Kachru (2008), and our framework has enabled us to integrate culture in its broader sense as an aspect of intelligibility.

The study has, thus, illustrated how challenging it can be for novice native-speaker teachers to grade their teacher talk to their learners' level of English. It has illustrated that language grading goes well beyond choices concerning the use of voice, such as rate of speech and articulation, and choices concerning choice of words and structures to express ideas. It has shown that it also includes choices about what is pragmatically appropriate, about how to interact effectively with students, and about how to structure discourse in a coherent and cohesive manner. On top of all this, teachers need to create a communicative context that will enable the effective illustration of meaning and they need to exercise awareness of how students' cultural backgrounds, life experiences and personal characteristics may influence their understandings of the meanings the teacher is trying to convey. Thus, it appears that effective language grading involves juggling many balls at the same time. Teachers – even those with much greater experience than the ones in the current study – may struggle to keep all these balls in the air, and efforts to do so may result in cognitive overload, which is likely to be exacerbated in situations in which teachers have the added strain of being observed and recorded, such as in the current study.

A limitation of the study is that it is not possible to draw conclusions about whether difficulties encountered by the teachers in grading their language were associated with 'noviceness', 'nativeness', or a combination of both these attributes. Lack of teaching experience, nervousness at being observed and recorded, and lack of awareness of how to grade language effectively are factors likely to have influenced the communicative choices made by the three teachers. Future research could compare the teacher talk of more experienced teachers and novice teachers. The 'unilateral idiomaticity' (Seidlhofer, 2001) of native speaker language use has been

identified as an important factor in communication breakdowns between native-speakers and non-native speakers. According to Kachru and Nelson (2001), native speakers are often less intelligible for NNS listeners than are other NNS speakers., Therefore, it would also be fruitful for future research to compare the teacher talk of native-speaker teachers and NNS teachers with similar levels of teaching experience.

All in all, we believe that the application of our framework has enriched our insights into language grading. By including interpretability, the tripartite Nelson intelligibility framework raised awareness that understanding spoken discourse goes beyond understanding the ideational meaning of words and utterances. However, interpretability was defined solely in terms of illocutionary meanings, which can be seen as broadly analogous to interpersonal meaning in our framework, and did not include either textual meaning, immediate context, or cultural context, all of which this study has shown to be crucial in understanding spoken discourse. The current study has provided an integrated framework that can illuminate the interplay between different levels of meaning, as well as contextual factors.

It is our hope that future studies can make use of the framework presented in this study to critically examine the intelligibility of discourse in a variety of contexts, both inside and outside the classroom, including encounters, such as the Port Arthur tour in Tasmania, where there is a compelling need for speakers to adapt their English to accommodate international listeners.

7. Broader implications

A broadened understanding is needed of what ‘language grading’ comprises and how it might be taught on English teacher-training courses. Even where language grading *is* explicitly taught, the emphasis tends to be on linguistic factors such as the speed of speech, the use of pauses and logical staging to organize spoken text, the use of high-frequency lexis, and grammatical simplicity (while retaining accuracy and naturalness). However, as this study has shown, language grading, as well as involving complex interweaving of different strands of meaning, is to a large extent also *cultural* in nature. This can be understood in the ‘macro’ sense, such as the way in which Cindy’s teaching of ‘emigration’ was seemingly compromised by her own implicit understanding of the nature of migration. But there is also a cultural component of language grading at a more micro level: the CLT-style lesson set-up is a genre that appears to be quite specific to the ‘small culture’ (Holliday, 2010) of communicative language teaching. This is to say that, beyond linguistic factors of how well the novice teachers may use their voices to convey information in class, their teacher talk is also part of a genre that may well be unfamiliar to their listeners. Thus even if they do manage to communicate their intended meaning, the overarching purpose may nevertheless be lost on listeners. This is where language grading goes beyond interpretability into the realm of culturally specific ways of making meaning. Teacher educators would therefore be wise to include large and small-scale *cultural* issues in language grading, as well as focusing on language.

There is likely to be a need for language grading awareness-raising and skill-development for *all* novice teachers, whether they are teaching English language or any other subject. Beyond the English-language teaching context, novice teachers in compulsory and post-compulsory educational contexts in multicultural-but-monolingual educational contexts like Australia and the UK regularly encounter students for whom English is an additional language. Like Phiona’s friends, who simply walked away from the impenetrable tour-guide commentary in Tasmania, might it be the case that second-language listeners may switch off, and metaphorically

walk away, from teachers, whether ‘native’ or ‘non-native’ speakers themselves, whose own English is insufficiently graded for learners to understand? While much more language-grading research is needed among schoolteachers and post-secondary educators, evidence from this study suggests that tailoring one’s own English for international listeners is not necessarily easy, even where teachers’ attention is explicitly drawn to the need to ‘grade’ their language and even where teachers are proficient in languages other than English.

Lastly, beyond education, those working in English in a myriad of professional fields, for example in tourism or business, may *also* need explicit awareness-raising, guidance, practice, and critical reflection on language grading if their own English-language communication is to be effective in international settings. Speakers whose language grading is ineffective may suffer financial penalties: for example, tourists may be reluctant to sign up for tours that they cannot understand.

In particular, native speakers of English from the US, the UK, or Australia, for instance, may need help in using English to communicate internationally. Graddol (2006) makes this point with reference to international business.

In organisations where English has become the corporate language, meetings sometimes go more smoothly when no native speakers are present. ... [T]he problem may be that few native speakers belong to the community of practice which is developing amongst *lingua franca* users. [Native speakers’] presence hinders communication.

(Graddol, 2006, p.115).

Just as English language learners need to learn this variety, so native English speakers - and for that matter proficient non-native English speakers - need to learn how to adjust their Englishes. Research and teaching of ‘language grading’ using an integrated framework such as presented in the current study may be a first step in how this can be achieved.

8. References

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