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Second Language Classroom Discourse: The Roles of Teacher and Learners

Euen Hyuk (Sarah) Jung
(Yonsei University)

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The present study aims to examine how the roles of teacher and learners affect the repair patterns of both teacher's and learner's utterances in English as a second language (ESL) classroom discourse. The study analyzed beginning ESL classroom discourse and found that the structure of repair seems to be greatly influenced by the roles of participants in a second language classroom. The teacher's repair work was mainly characterized by self-repair. In contrast, learners' repair sequences were predominantly characterized by other-repair. More specifically, self-initiation by the learner of the trouble source was cooperatively completed by the teacher and the other learners. Other-initiated and other-completed repair was the most prevalent form in the current classroom data, which was carried out by the teacher in both modulated and unmodulated manners. When the trouble sources were mostly concerned with the learners' problems with linguistic competence and information presented in the textbook, other-repair took place in a modulated manner (i.e., recasting and prompting). On the other hand, when dealing with learners' errors with factual knowledge, other-repair was conducted in an unmodulated way (i.e., 'no' plus correction).

[discourse analysis/second language learning, 담화분석/제2언어학습]

I. INTRODUCTION

Repairs often take place between a speaker and a hearer in everyday conversation for smooth communication. Repairs enable the speaker to resolve trouble in hearing, speaking, or understanding the talk (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977). Four types of repair trajectory can be identified: [Self-repair] (a) self-initiated and self-completed repair: the speaker responsible for the trouble source initiates and completes the repair, (b) other-initiated and self-completed repair: the hearer identifies the trouble source and initiates the repair; the speaker of the trouble source completes it; [Other-repair] (c) self-initiated and other-completed repair: the speaker of the trouble source initiates the repair; the hearer completes it, and (d) other-initiated and other-completed repair: the hearer identifies the trouble source and initiates and completes the repair (Schegloff et al., 1977).

A trouble source of any type, when pinpointed by the listener, might be face-threatening to the speaker of the trouble source because it reveals his or her inabilities (Goffman, 1974; Goodwin, 1983). To decrease the face-threat to the speaker, the listener attempts to take the responsibility for miscommunication as if there were problems with hearing or understanding the talk. The listener also attempts to provide the speaker with opportunities for self-repair prior to those for other-repair. If that speaker fails to self-repair, the listener must conduct the repair work for him or her, which is usually conducted in a modulated way, rather than in an unmodulated way (Schegloff et al., 1977).

Compared to research concerning repairs in everyday conversation, studies generally have not paid sufficient attention to second language (L2) classroom repairs as important considerations in an understanding of language learning (Wong, 2000). L2 classroom repairs include “statements of procedural rules, sanctions of violations of such rules, problems of hearing and understanding the talk, second starts, prompting, cluing and helping, explaining, and correction of errors” (van Lier, 1988, p. 183). Only a handful of conversation analysts have examined classroom repairs (Kasper, 1986; van Lier, 1988; McHoul, 1990; Seedhouse, 1997). Seedhouse (1997) examined a number of classroom discourse extracts and found that teachers employ various methods to correct learners'

errors in a modulated manner, such as repeating incorrect utterances with rising intonation (i.e., prompting) and using mitigated negative evaluation.

McHoul (1990) examined the organization of repair in content classrooms, in which self-repair was found to be most preferred, with other-repair being least preferred. Based on these findings, he concluded that there is no difference in preference for self-repair in the content classroom and everyday conversation. Kasper's (1986) study, however, showed that aims of teaching play a crucial role in entailing particular repair patterns. A major preference was found for other-repair in language-based phases of foreign language (FL) teaching, while content-based phases of FL teaching were mainly characterized by self-repair, paralleling repair preferences in ordinary conversation. Along the same line, van Lier (1988) maintained that it is necessary to examine the classroom setting carefully with respect to the types of repair it demands and to keep in mind that repair organization pattern is closely related to the classroom context.

Considering the fact that classroom language learning does not take place in void, but constantly involves participation from both the teacher and the learners in creating classroom discourse, it is necessary to examine in detail how repair work is carried out by all participants in the L2 classroom. Given the asymmetry in pedagogical discourse (including classrooms), it is particularly important to examine the institutional roles in analyzing classroom discourse. Consequently, the present study attempts to investigate how the roles of teacher and learners affect the repair patterns of both teacher's and learners' utterances in L2 classroom discourse. For the purpose of the analysis, I will first discuss repair of the teacher's utterances (i.e., repair of trouble sources in the teacher's utterances) and then discuss repair of the learners' utterances (i.e., repair of trouble sources in the learners' utterances).

II. METHOD

The material used for the present study involved a video-recording of 60-minute adult beginning ESL class at a major university in the United States. The purpose of the course was to develop L2 communication skills. Students were eleven adult ESL learners in their early twenties. They were from a

variety of cultural backgrounds, such as Algeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Republic of China, Thailand, Indonesia, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and Chile. The teacher was a female native speaker of English in her late thirties. In the classroom, the teacher stood in front of the blackboard, and the students sat in a semi-circle facing the teacher. A tape-recorder was on the teacher's desk for listening activities. The video camera was installed at the back of the classroom to record the lesson.

The aims of the lesson were to: (a) learn new vocabulary, (b) make dinner reservations over the phone, and (c) use count and non-count nouns appropriately. The lesson was composed of the following activities: (a) a vocabulary lesson, (b) a silent reading activity, (c) a listening activity, (d) role-playing activities, (e) a count and non-count lesson, and (f) the provision of homework assignment. The following is the transcription convention used in this study, which was modified based on Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974):

T	Teacher
S1, S2, etc	Identified student
S	Unidentified student
SS	Several students simultaneously
(0.4)	Pause lengths measured in tenths of a second
=	No intervals between adjacent utterances, the second utterance latched immediately to the first
:	Extension of the prior sound or syllable
?	Rising intonation, not necessarily a question
[	Simultaneous start or the beginning of an overlap
]	The point at which two overlapping or simultaneously-started utterances end
(( ))	Comments about the transcript, including non-verbal information
___	Indication of stress
-	Cut-off, self-interruption
.	Fall in tone, not necessarily the end of a sentence
→	Points relevant to the discussion

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Repair of Teacher's Utterances

1) Preference for Self-repair and Dispreference for Other-repair

The teacher's repair work is primarily characterized by self-initiated and self-completed repair. A replacement repair frequently takes place, in which one item is replaced by another (Excerpts (1)-(3)).

Excerpt (1) ((The teacher is explaining when to use the word "package" in explaining count and non-count nouns)).
T: What-what's the phrase? ***This is e::r, we had that the other day*** when Chikako, uh, you can say, the "package."

Excerpt (2) ((The teacher calls on Hamza to play a role of a waiter for the role-playing activity))
T: Hamza, ***we're gonna let you be... have you ever been a waiter before?***

Excerpt (3) ((Toward the end of class, the teacher is assigning homework for tomorrow))
T: OK? Alright, what I would like for you to do for your homework for tomorrow is ***page fifteen and sixteen*** in your, uh, excuse me, ***forty-nine and fifty*** in your workbook.

Self-initiated and self-completed repairs were found to be the major pattern of the teacher's repair work. However, there were no occurrences of other-initiated and self-completed repairs and neither were there self-initiated and other-completed or other-initiated and other-completed repairs. There appears to be, to my knowledge, no literature indicating other repair (initiated or completed) of teacher talk in classrooms. At the least, it would appear that such repairs are rare. Also, self-initiated and self-completed repair is the most common type of repair in general (Schegloff et al., 1977).

The teacher's frequent use of self-initiated and self-completed repair is not

unnatural, given the institutional role of the teacher, who is in charge of directing the talk and able to resort to various means to accomplish repair. It might be worth mentioning the importance of institutional roles to the repair patterns at hand. The structure of repairs seems to be greatly influenced by the roles of participants in an L2 classroom; Participants in classrooms have pre-allocated roles by which repair sequence is managed. As Heritage (1988, cited in Nicholls, 1993, p. 184) suggested, classroom discourse is governed by various factors such as "task, equity, efficiency, etc in ways that mundane conversational practices manifestly are not." A similar observation was made by Norrick (1991) that instructed talk-in-interaction manifests an instantiation of a basic order that hinges upon how participants perceive their differential roles in co-constructing repair sequences.

2. Repair of Learners' Utterances

Unlike the teacher's repair trajectories, other-repair is found to be the most predominant form in the learners' repair work.

1) Dispreference for Self-repair

In contrast to the teacher's repair organization, self-initiated and self-completed repair rarely takes place in learners' repair sequences, but when it does it involves word replacement. This repair sequence is demonstrated in Excerpt (4).

Excerpt (4) ((S2 is making a dinner reservation over the phone))

1 S1: Excuse me, tonight, it's a kind of emergency. We...we don't have an available table at 6 o'clock.
→2 S2: E::r, (0.4) can I make it at seven o'clock? Uh, six, six forty?

In Excerpt (4), S2 uses word replacement, in which the utterance "seven o'clock" is replaced by another utterance "six forty" in combination with the nonlexical utterance "uh" (i.e., a repair initiator). Other-initiated and self-completed repair does not occur in this study. The infrequent use of self-repair by the learners seems to be attributable to the fact that the learners

are not given sufficient opportunities to self-repair, which will be discussed in the next section.

2) Preference for Other-repair

(1) Self-initiated and Other-completed Repair

In the classroom, it is not surprising to observe that less proficient L2 learners seek help to carry out smooth interactions. The self-initiation by the student is collaboratively completed by the teacher and the other students. Excerpt (5) illustrates this point.

Excerpt (5) ((S2 is making a dinner reservation over the phone))

1 S1: Hello. E::r Ale-Alexander's hard, hard rock? Hard rock. May I help you?
→2 S2: Yes, e::r, can I ma:ke? E::r ((S2 shifts her gaze to the teacher)) what's the::?
→3 T: Um, [a reservation.
→4 SS: [A reservation.
→5 S2: Reservation for the e:r e:r e:r f, Friday the, the ninth for e:r five people?

In Excerpt (5), S1 and S2 engage in the role-playing activity, in which S1 is playing a role of restaurant host taking a reservation over the phone from S2 who is playing a role of a customer. In line 1, having difficulty completing the sentence on her own, S1 stretches the sound "ma:ke." She then shifts her gaze to the teacher for assistance, which is accompanied by a wh-question "what's the::?" At this point in lines 3 and 4, both the teacher and the other students cooperatively assist S2 by providing her with the suitable item "a reservation" necessary to complete the sentence-in-progress. S2 accepts this item "a reservation" and incorporates it in the following turn in line 5.

(2) Other-initiated and Other-completed Repair

Other-initiated and other-completed repair is the predominant repair trajectory in the present L2 classroom data set, which is carried out by the teacher in

both modulated (i.e., recasting and prompting) and unmodulated (i.e., 'no' plus correction) manners.

① Other-initiated and Other-completed Repair in a modulated manner

Recasting

One form of modulated repair manifested in the current L2 classroom talk is a teacher's recast. Recast is defined as "a response to an utterance that incorporates content words of the utterance, but changes the utterance in some way (e.g., phonological, syntactic, and lexical) without adding any information" (Doughty, 1993, p. 102). Recast does not postpone other-correction; rather it immediately replaces the learner's errors with a correct version of the linguistic forms, not allowing for the learner to self-repair. The teacher tends to provide recasts dealing with errors of linguistic forms. Excerpt (6) illustrates this point.

Excerpt (6) ((S6 explains to the teacher the process of making ice cream))

1 S6: You cook.=
→2 T: =You cook it.
3 S6: And, e:r e:r change uh- change the color ((making circles with his fingers to show something is being changed)).
→4 T: And it changes [the color], yeah.=
5 S6: [The color].
6 S6: =The milk no: white.=
→7 T: =The milk isn't (0.2) [white].
8 S6: [White]. The milk change brown.=
→9 T: =Alright, the milk becomes (0.2) [brown].
10 S6: [Brown].

In Excerpt (6), in response to the teacher's question about the ice cream that he previously mentioned, S6 is trying to describe to the teacher the process of making it, in which the teacher continuously provides recasts to him (lines 2, 4, 7, and 9). During this exchange, S6 still smoothly continues with his description of the ice cream without being interrupted. As with conversational backchannels, the teacher has no intention of taking the floor from the student when she

recasts his utterances. These recasts serve to support the student's utterances and to provide grammatically correct input for the class. Since this phenomenon of exchange between student and teacher occurs over four consecutive turns, it is a fairly regular set of behaviors, which illustrates the co-construction of classroom discourse.

Prompting

Other-initiation of repair in a modulated manner can also be carried out in the form of prompting. In prompting, the hearer repeats the erroneous item with rising intonation as a way of inviting correction. Oftentimes, this prompting is followed by the teacher's systematic use of gaze, which functions to assign a turn to complete the repair.

Another unique feature that manifests in other-repair in the present L2 discourse is an IRF structure. Such an exchange structure consists of three phases. First, the teacher initiates a turn by asking a student a question (i.e., the initiation act). Then, the designated student responds to the question (i.e., the response act). The teacher provides feedback on the student's remark (i.e., the feedback act) (McHoul, 1978, 1990; Mehan, 1979, 1982, 1985; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975, 1992). Fundamental to an understanding of an IRF exchange seems to be the shared expectation for instructed talk among the teacher and learners. "In classroom settings, when the teacher assumes the role of initiator, s/he exercises considerable power, not only because of the inherent power differential between teacher and students, but also because of the roles s/he assigns to the students as respondents" (Haneda, 2004, pp. 181-182). In other words, the IRF sequence does not seem to be unnatural, considering the institutional role and its accompanying discursive rights and obligations in the classroom setting. The teacher has the right to allot, interrupt, and stop the students' utterances if necessary to reach the objective of the lesson. This phenomenon is illustrated in Excerpt (7).

Excerpt (7) ((S2 is making a dinner reservation over the phone))

1 T: Alright, we can stop just a minute. Let's stop just a minute...good. Do you have a question, Hamza? You understand the day, what day?

2 S1: The, the 16th.
→3 T: The 16th?= ((shifting her gaze from S1 to the whole class))
4 SS: =No. The 9th, the 9th.
→5 T: The 9th, OK, the time, did you understand the time? ((her gaze stays at the whole class))
→6 SS: The time, time, around 6.
→7 T: 6 o'clock...OK...OK, the number in the party? ((her gaze stays at the whole class))
→8 SS: Five...five.
→9 T: Five, OK...alright, so we've got that...alright, so five people in the party...the time is 6 o'clock. Now let's continue the conversation, OK? ((shifting her gaze to S1 and S2 from the whole class))

In Excerpt (7), S1 and S2 engage in the role play, in which S1 plays the role of a restaurant host and S2 plays the role of a guest making a reservation over the phone. Prior to the actual role play, the teacher calls for a brief stop and asks S1 a question. In line 2, S1 provides an incorrect answer to the teacher's question. To this, in line 3, the teacher repeats part of S1's prior turn, "The 16th?" with rising intonation to signal the need to repair the error with S1's understanding of the role-playing information (i.e., information presented in the textbook). Instead of providing an opportunity for S1 to self-repair, the teacher shifts her gaze from S1 to allocate a turn to the other students to complete the repair. Picking up on the teacher's nonverbal cue, the other students promptly provide the correct answer in line 4. In line 5, the teacher confirms it. Instead of asking S1 a question, the teacher directs her question to the whole class by sustaining her gaze at the entire class in line 5 (i.e., the initiation act). Then, the other students provide the appropriate item "around 6" in line 6 (i.e., the response act). In line 7, the teacher confirms the student's response by repeating the correct item "6 o'clock" (i.e., the feedback act). In the same line, the teacher again directs her question to the whole class (i.e., the initiation act). In line 8, the other students supply the correct item "five" (i.e., the response act). In line 9, the teacher confirms the students' response by repeating the correct item "five" and provides positive feedback on the remark (i.e., the

feedback act). Then the teacher asks S1 and S2 to continue their conversation by shifting her gaze to S1 and S2 from the whole class.

② Other-initiated and other-completed repair in an unmodulated manner

Other-repair is carried out in an unmodulated way (i.e., 'no' plus correction), when the trouble sources are mainly concerned with problems with the learners' factual knowledge. This point is demonstrated in Excerpt (8).

Excerpt (8) ((The teacher is explaining the difference between count and non-count nouns))

1 S7: It is count, count ((holding glue))
→2 T: No, the, the substance inside is non-count. But this is count, the container is count.=
3 S7: =Yes, the container.

In Excerpt (8), before going around in the classroom, the teacher explains the difference between count and non-count nouns to the whole class. Students are to identify count and non-count products she has brought to the class. The teacher walks around in the classroom when S7 labels glue as a count noun in line 1. To this, the teacher boldly says "no" and explains glue itself is non-count, but its container is count in line 2. In line 3, S7 readily accepts the teacher's correction.

In sum, L2 learners' repair sequence was predominantly characterized by other-repair. Self-initiation by the learner of the trouble source was cooperatively completed by the teacher and the other learners. Other-initiated and other-completed repair was the most prevalent form in the current classroom data, which was carried out by the teacher in both modulated and unmodulated manners. When the trouble sources were mostly concerned with the learners' problems with linguistic competence and information presented in the textbook, other-repair took place in a modulated manner (i.e., recasting and prompting). On the other hand, when dealing with learners' errors with factual knowledge, other-repair was conducted in an unmodulated way (i.e., 'no' plus correction).

IV. CONCLUSION

The current findings show how the institutional roles influence the distribution of repair sequences in classroom discourse. It might not be so surprising to find that teacher's repair was mainly characterized by self-repair. One must note that classroom data is institutional data, and some observations, such as that there are no other-initiated other or self repairs of the teacher's talk can, at least in part, be seen as a consequence of this speaker being the teacher, through which control of turn-taking, use of third position in sequences, and main source of first pair part turns, are indicative of the role.

Equally natural to observe is that the most preferred repair in learners' repair work was other-repair and that self-repair rarely occurred in the L2 classroom, considering the pedagogical orientation and the institutionally-defined roles of teacher and learners (Kasper, 1986; van Lier, 1988; Norrick, 1991). Unlike the symmetry of interactions observed in ordinary conversation, the classroom talk is characterized by the asymmetry between the teacher and learners, in which an imbalance exists with respect to differential distribution of knowledge, rights to knowledge, and access to communication resources (Drew & Heritage, 1992).

Motivated by the teacher's position of authority in the present data set, the teacher controlled most of the turns. The teacher initiated a turn with a question or a statement to solicit a learner's response, and then, the following turn almost always went back to the teacher's feedback (i.e., an IRF pattern). Although speakers change, classroom interaction creates a dyadic structure of the teacher and the learners. Unlike everyday conversations, the turns in pedagogical interaction are given and taken between two sides of participants, that is, the teacher and learners as a whole. In many cases, more than one learner responds to the teacher's question when the teacher does not specify the next speaker; however, it is fairly rare that a learner's turn is directly projected to another learner's turn in this structure. This situation then specifies the teacher as having the most turns in advance. In sum, all these characteristics in classroom discourse are due to the teacher's institutionally-defined role. Her role as an authority figure makes her the designated turn allocator who can provide a turn to the students collectively as well as individually.

As Schegloff (2000) notes in his discussion of repair, the matter of *who*

indicates learners' repair is also important. It is worth pointing out that the teacher alone tended to do the unmodulated as well as modulated repairs of learners' trouble sources. It seems that the unique setting, that is, the institutional roles (i.e., teacher-learner roles) allowed the teacher to carry out the unmodulated repair of learners' utterances, which contradicts the preference for self-repair in general discussed in Schegloff et al. (1977). Different manners of other-repairs seem to be manifested to serve different pedagogical purposes. The teacher adopted different ways of repair according to the pedagogical aims that she had in mind at a particular moment. Other-repair was carried out in a modulated manner when the instructional objective was to help the learners' problems with linguistic competence and information presented in the textbook. On the other hand, when the instructional goal dealt with the learners' errors with factual knowledge, other-repair was conducted in an unmodulated way. In other words, the manners of repair seem to have been determined by the teacher's underlying pedagogical goal.

As been discussed so far, it is not unexpected to observe that other-repair is most preferred and that self-repair rarely occurs in L2 learners' repair work, given the pedagogical orientation and the institutionally-defined roles of learners and teachers (Kasper, 1986; van Lier, 1988; Norrick, 1991). However, the concept of "wait time" deserves mentioning in the discussion of classroom repair. Rowe (1969) found that both the quality and quantity of the learners' responses increased according to the teacher's increased wait time. Similarly, Holley and King (1971) observed that classroom errors decreased over 50% of the time, when the teacher waited for 5 to 10 seconds before either providing hesitant learners with correct answers or cutting off the learners' erroneous utterances. If we consider the ultimate goal of language learning that the learners themselves should be able to self-monitor and self-repair in communication, the notion of "wait time" is all the more critical. Kasper (1986) discussed the significance of self-completed repair in a classroom setting as follows:

> The self-completion thus not only gives the learner a chance to restore face; it also has a learning function in that the learner, in productively using a particular item or rule, can test a hypothesis about FL or automatize existing FL knowledge. Finally, it provides

> the teacher with information about the status of the learner's FL knowledge (p. 29).

The whole issue of corrective feedback (i.e. error correction) goes beyond the scope of this paper; however, there is no doubt that it is a crucial issue that any foreign language teachers face in the classroom everyday. Teachers often seem to find themselves in a dilemma. If teachers let the students' errors go uncorrected to further the communicative goals of classroom, students may potentially acquire the wrong forms. On the other hand, if teachers correct the students' errors, it might not only interrupt the classroom communication flow, but it might also lead to inhibiting students' active class participation (See Kim, 2002 and Shin, 2003 for language anxiety matters).

There is extensive discussion on the error correction issue from both theoretical and pedagogical perspectives (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Chaudron, 1988; Cohen, 1975; Fanselow, 1977; Horner, 1988): (a) Should learners' errors be corrected?, (b) If so, *when* should they be corrected?, (c) *How* should they be corrected?, (d) *Which types of errors* should be corrected?, and (e) *Who* should do the correction? It seems there cannot be any simple and absolute answers to these questions because of such a complex nature of decision-making process on error treatment. These questions should be answered in contexts where such factors as the aim of lesson, the nature of curriculum, the cultural context, the students' learning styles, the teacher's personalities and teaching philosophy are taken into account.

The current study attempted to contribute to the language teaching field by examining the roles of teacher and learners in constructing repair sequences in pedagogical discourse. Nonetheless, the study is limited in that the data set is small and that it is not appropriate to make generalizations on such a small data set with the short duration, in particular, for only one teacher. These limitations need to be addressed in future studies to deepen our knowledge about the dynamics of instructed talk-in-interaction.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: College/Higher

Euen Hyuk (Sarah) Jung
Department of English Language and Literature
Yonsei University
134 Sinchon-dong Seodaemun-gu, Seoul 120-749, South Korea
Tel: (02)2123-2326
Fax: (02)392-0275
Email: junge@yonsei.ac.kr

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