EUROCALL

UCLouvain

Negotiating for meaning in interaction: differences between virtual exchanges and regular online activities

Laia Canals[1]

Abstract. The present research explores the interactional nature of oral tasks carried out in two types of learner dyads in terms of their likelihood to foster negotiation for meaning during Language Related Episodes (LREs). Quantitative data analyses reveal how learners in same L1 dyads, Spanish English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, and in different L1 dyads, Canadian learners of Spanish and Spanish learners of English participating in a virtual exchange, modify their speech using negotiations and clarifications to make it comprehensible to their interlocutors. Eighteen different L1 dyads of university learners doing a virtual exchange (Canada-Spain) and eighteen dyads of Spanish-speakers learning English at the Spanish university carried out three oral communicative tasks online following the same procedures. Data were transcribed, LREs were identified, quantified for each dyad, and analyzed to determine their characteristics in terms of types of triggers, modified output, and type of feedback provided. Initial findings point to substantial differences in meaning negotiation occurring during LREs in each group. Different-L1 dyads exhibit more clarifications, meaning negotiation, and provide more feedback, which leads to higher amounts of comprehensible and modified output than learners in same L1 dyads.

Keywords: language related episodes, SCMC, oral interaction, meaning negotiation.

1. Introduction

Studies on Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication (SCMC) have used the interactionist paradigm to prove the role that negotiation of meaning in learner-to-learner interaction activities play in L2 development (Loewen & Isbell, 2017). Meaning negotiation episodes allow for comprehensible input,

1. Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), Barcelona, Spain; ecanalsf@uoc.edu; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9605-012X

How to cite this article: Canals, L. (2019). Negotiating for meaning in interaction: differences between virtual exchanges and regular online activities. In F. Meunier, J. Van de Vyver, L. Bradley & S. Thouësny (Eds), *CALL and complexity – short papers from EUROCALL 2019* (pp. 63-68). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2019.38.987

corrective feedback, and modified output to occur, which direct learners' attention to form and are beneficial for L2 development. In addition, research on SCMC has increasingly focused on the importance of voice-based SCMC modalities to develop oral communication skills in interactive tasks conducted via videoconferencing as part of Virtual Exchanges (VE). This study determines the ability of oral collaborative interactive tasks carried out as part of VE to promote negotiation of meaning in learner-to-learner interactions between different L1 dyads (Canadian learners and Spanish learners' dyads) and compares that with interactions between same-L1 dyads (Spanish EFL learners carrying out the tasks in English).

The aim of the present research is to examine learner-to-learner interactions in order to characterize the LREs they produce. LRE sequences consist of focus-on-form episodes in meaning-focused interactive tasks triggered by a communication breakdown which involves meaning negotiation (Swain & Lapkin, 1995), including feedback and modified output.

The present research sets out to answer the following research questions.

- What are the characteristics of the LREs produced in each group (different L1 versus same L1 dyads) in terms of type of triggers (lexical, phonetic, and morphosyntactic)?

- Which LREs lead to more meaning negotiation, modified output, and feedback?

- What type of feedback is provided, and which type leads to more modified output and gets more noticed?

2. Participants and procedures

Seventy-two language learners at two universities, one in Canada and one in Spain, were divided into two groups. The first 36 participants took part in a virtual exchange where learners were paired up with a proficient speaker of the target language they were learning and carried out three oral communicative tasks using a videoconferencing tool. The other 36 participants, Spanish-speakers learning English at the Spanish university, carried out the same oral communicative tasks in English and online following the same procedures. The tasks consisted of three two-way open-ended communicative tasks which involved information exchange,

decision-making, and comparison and analysis of information. The sessions were recorded and yielded 108 oral tasks (70 hours). Seven hundred and ninety-three LREs were identified, transcribed, and coded according to their length, dyad type, trigger type, amount and type of feedback, modified output, meaning negotiation, and resolution.

3. Results

Table 1 below displays that 36 dyads produced 793 LREs. Lexical triggers fostered more LREs regardless of the dyad type (53% and 64%), followed by global-misunderstanding triggers in the case of the same-L1 group (34%) and morphosyntactic ones (20%) in the case of the different-L1 group. However, out of the 54 interactive tasks carried out between same L1 dyads, 37 failed to produce any LREs. If we compare the amount of LREs produced overall, we observe that only 4% (N=32) are produced by learners in same L1 dyads. Within the same L1 group, we can observe how some triggers produced very few LREs: one phonetic trigger and four morphosyntactic ones. This made the comparison between dyads extremely challenging and hindered its generalizability. Therefore, this paper will only focus on the characteristics of dyads within the different L1 group.

Table 1. Trigger types in same L1 versus different L1 dyads

	Same L1 dyads		**Different L1 dyads**	
LRE triggers	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Lexical	18	56	484	64
Phonetic	1	3	87	11
Morphosyntactic	4	12	155	20
Global	11	34	79	10
Total	32	4% of the total LREs	761	96% of the total LREs
Total LREs	793			

Table 2 displays the LREs which fostered more feedback, modified output, meaning negotiation, and resolutions. We observe that morphosyntactic triggers produced feedback at the highest rate (.64), followed by phonetic ones (.39). The LREs which have a phonetic trigger exhibited the highest rates of modified output (.83), followed closely by morphosyntactic (.75) ones and global (.70) ones. Regarding meaning negotiation, it was global misunderstandings which exhibit the highest rates (.65). Finally, we find high resolution rates for most LREs: phonetic (.95), morphosyntactic (.94) and lexical ones (.89).

Table 2. Instances of negotiation, modified output, feedback, and resolutions in different L1 dyads

	Lexical		Phonetic		Morphosyntactic		Global		Overall	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Feedback	0.18	0.39	0.39	0.49	0.64	0.48	0.04	0.21	0.30	0.46
Modified Output	0.69	0.46	0.83	0.38	0.75	0.44	0.70	0.47	0.72	0.45
Negotiation	0.27	0.45	0.20	0.40	0.20	0.40	0.65	0.49	0.26	0.44
Resolutions	0.89	0.31	0.95	0.21	0.94	0.23	0.83	0.39	0.91	0.29

When examining the types of feedback produced, in Table 3 we can observe that the great majority of the feedback learners provided to their partners were in the form of explicit corrections (N=192). Explicit corrections were also the ones which were more noticed (N=186) along with elicitations, which were noticed in more than half the time. Recasts, however, in two out of three cases got mostly ignored or not understood. Whenever they got noticed, elicitations lead to modified output at higher rates (75%) than any other feedback type. Recasts lead to modified output on two out of five occasions and explicit corrections, although they got more noticed, only lead to modified output in 24% of occasions.

Table 3. Feedback type, feedback effectiveness and modified output in different L1 dyads

	Recast	Corrections	Elicitation
	N	**N**	**N**
Ignored/unnoticed	9	6	3
Meaning understood	5	186	4
Meaning not understood	1	0	0
Total	15 (7%)	192 (90%)	7 (3%)
Lead to modified output	2 (40%)	45 (24%)	3 (75%)

4. Discussion and conclusions

The first finding underscores the fact that interactions between different L1 dyads taking part in a VE foster more meaning negotiation than interactions between same L1 dyads carrying out similar tasks, which is consistent with other findings (Bueno-Alastuey, 2013). Although earlier studies indicated that different LRE triggers showed similar numbers of instances of negotiation and feedback (Kenning, 2010), the current paper has observed a clear tendency for global triggers to produce more meaning negotiation and phonetic ones to lead to

more modified output. This is consistent with findings by Lyster (2001) and with Bueno Alastuey (2011) who also found more modified output following phonetic triggers. On the other hand, morphosyntactic triggers led to more feedback, in the shape of explicit corrections which get more noticed, also observed by Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006).

This study contributes to the growing body of research underscoring the benefits of learner-to-learner interaction in voice-based SCMC for L2 development. The ability to direct learners' attention to linguistic elements (focus-on-form) in meaning-related tasks, pivotal for the development of the target language, can be observed in the LREs allowing for comprehensible input, corrective feedback, and modified output to occur.

5. Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to Cristina Ráfales and her students at Dalhousie University and my students at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya for agreeing to participate in this research.

References

Bueno Alastuey, M. C. (2011). Perceived benefits and drawbacks of synchronous voice-based computer-mediated communication in the foreign language classroom. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *24*(5), 419-432. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2011.574639

Bueno-Alastuey, M. C. (2013). Interactional feedback in synchronous voice-based computer mediated communication: Effect of dyad. *System*, *41*(3), 543-559. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.05.005

Ellis, R., Loewen, S., & Erlam, R. (2006). Implicit and explicit corrective feedback and the acquisition of L2 grammar. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 28*(2), 339-368. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0272263106060141

Kenning, M. (2010). Collaborative scaffolding in online task-based voice interactions between advanced learners. *ReCALL, 22*(2), 135-151. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0958344010000042

Loewen, S., & Isbell, D. R. (2017). Pronunciation in face-to-face and audio-only synchronous computer-mediated learner interactions. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *39*(2), 225-256. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0272263116000449

Lyster, R. (2001). Negotiation of form, recasts, and explicit correction in relation to error types and learner repair in immersion classrooms. *Language Learning, 48*(2), 183-218. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9922.00039

Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (1995). Problems in output and the cognitive processes they generate: a step towards second language learning. *Applied linguistics*, *16*(3), 371-391. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/16.3.371

Published by Research-publishing.net, a not-for-profit association
Contact: info@research-publishing.net

CALL and complexity – short papers from EUROCALL 2019
Edited by Fanny Meunier, Julie Van de Vyver, Linda Bradley, and Sylvie Thouësny

Publication date: 2019/12/09

Typeset by Research-publishing.net
Cover theme by © 2019 Frédéric Verolleman
Cover layout by © 2019 Raphaël Savina (raphael@savina.net)

Fonts used are licensed under a SIL Open Font License

ISBN13: 978-2-490057-54-2 (Ebook, PDF, colour)
ISBN13: 978-2-490057-55-9 (Ebook, EPUB, colour)
ISBN13: 978-2-490057-53-5 (Paperback - Print on demand, black and white)
Print on demand technology is a high-quality, innovative and ecological printing method; with which the book is never 'out of stock' or 'out of print'.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.
A cataloguing record for this book is available from the British Library.

Legal deposit, France: Bibliothèque Nationale de France - Dépôt légal: décembre 2019.