UNIVERSITY ESL LEARNERS' CROSS-CULTURAL TRANSITIONS THROUGH WEB-BASED PROJECT WORK

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to account for East Asian learners' cross-cultural transitions to US university Intensive English classroom culture within a technology-mediated language teaching approach, PrOCALL (Project-Oriented Computer Assisted Language Learning). It explored the influence of this approach on classroom interaction patterns acquired in the prior EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms of their countries of origin. Our interpretation of this influence demonstrates that web-based project work has potential to boost cross-cultural communication, facilitating East Asian learners' socialization to the interactive norms of the US university Intensive English classroom. In the study, a group of ESL (English as a Second Language) learners in a university Intensive English high-intermediate reading class implemented a cross-cultural project using web-based authentic materials and tasks. They were involved in decision-making on a cultural topic for a group project, data collection on their cultural topic, group webpage design, and oral presentation. During these activities, learners showed interest and engagement in getting to know other cultures and increased oral interactions. Interviews with the learners confirmed that their classroom interactions had been enhanced through the web-based project implementation.

Keywords: Web-Based Project, Technology-Mediated Approach, Cross-Cultural Transition.

INTRODUCTION

This study explores how, in a university Intensive English program, a technology-mediated language teaching approach facilitates East Asian learners' transitions from their previous EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts to the current ESL (English as a Second Language) setting[1]. To conduct the study, the first author, Kang, developed a PrOCALL (Project-Oriented Computer-Assisted Language Learning)-inspired web-based group project entitled "Cultural Project for Guided ESL Reading." The enrichment of linguistic proficiency with cultural proficiency through technology-enhanced collaborative web-based project work is a defining feature of PrOCALL research. In this particular study, however, in addition to learning objectives related to general US culture, Kang, as the Intensive English reading instructor, used PrOCALL to assist her learners in negotiating US classroom culture; that is, she set out to help them transition from the socialization patterns around classroom participation norms they had acquired in their home countries. As Chinese and South Korean students coming from teacher-centered classroom environments, this meant transitioning them into the more learner centered and communicative environment of the US university Intensive English classroom. Drawing on data collected from surveys and from interviews with learners about their previous EFL classroom experiences, as well as on interviews about and observations of learners' recent experience with her PrOCALL-Oriented ESL instruction, Kang finds that PrOCALL can be effectively used not just to achieve the target language and culture goals most typical of university ESL settings, but to serve as a transition tool in socializing students towards the participation norms characteristic of the US university intensive English classroom. More specifically, web-based project implementation proves to enhance target learners' classroom interactions.

Literature Review

Interaction Enriching Project-Oriented CALL

The use of PrOCALL as an intervention into the cultural

[1] When learners learn English in a context where English is used as the medium of communication, they are learning English as a second language (ESL). On the other hand, when learners learn English as a foreign language (EFL) they learn English in a context where their own language is the medium of communication.

discontinuity learners experience when moving from the teacher-centered EFL classrooms of their home countries to the student-centered ESL classrooms of the US university is new. PrOCALL is most typically known for being a technique that facilitates learners' coming to know more about a target culture through collaborative web-based project work that creates a natural, socio-cultural context for target language use and acquisition. It is not typically framed, as we do here, in terms of the cross-cultural transitions learners make when they move from the EFL environments of their countries of origin to the ESL setting of the university Intensive English program.

An innovation upon project-based learning (Debski, 2000), typical PrOCALL approaches seek to enhance learners' awareness of the target culture through project work, such as webpage creation (Jean-Ellis, Debski, and Wigglesworth, 2005; Lewis & Atzert, 2000; Kumamoto-Healey, 2000; Toyoda, 2000), specifically the use of computers for data collection. In the limited space of classroom, through PrOCALL, learners get to be engaged in social interaction during their web-based project work (Jean-Ellis et al., 2005; Kumamoto-Healey, 2000; Toyota, 2000) as a means of solving problems and sharing ideas with one another; to date, however, PrOCALL researchers have only been interested in this social interaction for the way it achieves the dual goals of learning the target culture and facilitating acquisition of the target language. To this end, on a general level, they have found that the social interactions inherent to the PrOCALL approach facilitate learners' involvement in learning the target culture and language with a sense of autonomy (Stoller, 1997; Wrigley, 1998) and that student-teacher interactions also improve as PrOCALL promotes a question-friendly instructional environment (Lewis & Atzert, 2000; Toyoda, 2001; Jean-Ellis et al., 2005).

More specifically with respect to improving ESL reading, the social interactions inherent to a PrOCALL approach also prove to be effective. First, the web-based reading required of PrOCALL projects provides learners with easy access to authentic and diverse materials to read in the target language (Andrews, 2000; Gaspar, 1998; Johnson and Heffernan, 2006; Lee, 1998; Luck, 2008; Sinyor, 1998; Warschauer, 1999). Accordingly, integrating the PrOCALL

approach into ESL reading instruction can result in significant increases in learners' reading of authentic materials (Blanchard, McLain, & Bartshe, 2005; Gambrell, 2005; Hancock, 1999; Khan, 1997; Levine, Ferenz, and Reves, 2000; Brandl, 2002; Walz, 1998) and in their application of effective reading skills, such as skimming and scanning (Elliot, 2005; Morkes and Nielsen, 1997; Nielsen, 2000; Verhoeven & Snow, 2001). Second, web-based reading can enhance learners' engagement due to the way that a variety of online texts together with multi-media features, such as visual images and audio/videos and interactive tasks, increases authentic interest (Chun, 2001; Chun & Plass, 1996; Ercetin, 2003; Gaspar, 1998; Lin & Chen, 2007; Liu, 2004; Yanguas, 2009). Third, with PrOCALL, learners collaborate more immediately and actively with peers in order to cognitively comprehend their readings (Osuna & Meskill, 1998; Kramsch, A'Ness, & Lam, 2000).

While these findings about PrOCALL's influence on learners' classroom social interaction and engagement may suggest the effective use of PrOCALL as a cultural transition tool, to date no studies have centered that purpose and the idea of cultural discontinuity in their PrOCALL applications. This study extends the focus on cultural learning that has been central to PrOCALL beyond simply the idea of using project-based work to promote learning about the target (national) culture to, instead, using that work to learn to learn in the target culture of the university Intensive English classroom. This requires a transition from the interactive norms of the prior EFL settings to those of the current ESL environment, a transition that, for many East Asian learners' in particular, is marked by an experience of cultural discontinuity.

Cultural Discontinuity in the Transition to Western Classroom Culture

When East Asian students arrive in the US for university study they inevitably experience a disconnect from the social and school culture of their home setting as they encounter expectations for classroom participation driven by Western school norms and practices. This disconnect has been termed "cultural discontinuity" and, as revealed in the following quote, is often emphasized in terms of differences

in home-to-school cultural preferences and practices:

> [Cultural discontinuity refers to] a school-based behavioral process where the cultural value-based learning preferences and practices of many ethnic minority students – those typically originating from home or parental socialization activities – are discontinued at school (Tyler, Uqdah, Dillihunt, Beatty-Hazelbaker, Conner, Gadson, Henchy, Hughes, Mulder,Owens, Roan-Belle, Smith, & Stevens, 2008, p. 281)

In this way, cultural discontinuity, as applied to home-to-school transitions, has been used to explain the additional work that students from culturally- and linguistically-diverse families have to do in meeting expectations for school success that are based on dominant norms. While students are expected to learn classroom practices and norms at school (Mehan, 1998) as a way of 'socialization' (Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005; Gay, 2010; Johnson, 1982), students coming from diverse home cultures incongruent to that of the US white middle class face a dramatic transition as they work to adhere to the standardized school culture (Ogbu, 1982).

Cultural discontinuity, however, can also be applied, as we do here, to differences in school-to-school cultural practices and preferences. Given the socialization of their cultural values in the context of their home countries, East Asian students often seem quite "alien" upon arrival in the mainstream university ESL classroom. The comment, "Sometimes teaching ESL is like living on Mars," made by one of Kang's colleagues in her Intensive English program, illustrates how, in responding to these learners' unfamiliar classroom participation patterns, ESL instructors, without understanding the experience of cultural discontinuity, might provide negative feedback. The statement most explicitly reveals challenges in an ESL learner's understanding of academic writing conventions and raises questions about how, because of the influence of previous patterns of interaction between classroom teachers and students in the learner's home country, this learner might have failed to effectively communicate with the teacher to clarify the expectations for the assignment. The instructor's remark, "Sometimes teaching ESL is like living on Mars,"

implies that teaching ESL is far beyond the issue of teaching English language itself; the reference to Mars connotes a kind of encounter with a completely different world.

The cultural discontinuity represented by East Asian students in American university classrooms is generally understood as being caused by their transition from Confucian values, such as collectivism and harmony-through-hierarchy, to the favored Western cultural values of individualism and competition (Boykin et al., 2005; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998; Tyler et al., 2006). While certainly variability will exist in the way students from East Asian countries experience Confucian values in their schooling, it continues to be the predominant way of describing the differences between Eastern and Western culture and institutions, including schools.

Confucian Values in the EFL Context

East Asian countries share the historic foundational value of Confucianism (Fetzer and Soper, 2007; Nisbett, 2003). Influenced by China's Confucianism, East Asian countries in general consider education to be the most important method for an individual to obtain social mobility and sociopolitical privilege. The Confucian values of respect for learning and academic achievement are often a crucial motivating element in East Asian students' educational achievements (Cummings, 1996). The collectivistic orientation of Confucian values, such as "strong leadership, respect for cooperation and hard work, commitment to education, and family-oriented human relations" (Lee, 2000, p. 2) has been the impetus, some argue, for the unprecedented economic development of these societies. Consequently, the emphasis on the importance of education in Confucian ethics puts teachers and scholars within the prominent class of an "academic background-oriented" society (p. 5).

In Confucian values, thinking is held in higher regard rather than speaking; the more an individual is educated, the more s/he tends to be silent. According to Confucius:

> The gentleman… is quick in action but cautious in speech. He goes to men possessed of the Way to have himself put right. Such a man can be described as eager to learn (de Bettignies and Tan, 2007, p. 19).

This excerpt indicates that, to be a gentleman (i.e., a virtuous person), an individual should be prudent in speaking (hence, do more thinking than speaking).

Confucian values also pursue social harmony through hierarchical relationships: (i) Ruler-Subject; (ii) Father-Son; (iii) Elder Brother-Younger Brother; (iv) Husband-Wife; and (v) Among Friends (de Bettignies & Tan, 2007, p. 20; Nisbett, 2003). Here, with the exception of "among friends," all relationships are vertical reflecting a superior-subordinate hierarchy. Confucian ethics not only specify appropriate behaviors between these five relations, but also underscore the appropriate roles and responsibilities within each relationship in order to build social order.

The influence of Confucianism on East Asian schools is found in classroom teaching and learning practices and their constitutive social interactions. For example, as the most knowledgeable people in China (Bond, 1996), teachers are expected to provide the knowledge and facts required of students in order to pass examinations (Nelson, 1995). In the classroom, therefore, rote memorization of facts is a predominant learning style. In interacting with teachers, students are expected to show their high respect to teachers by using titles and by being obedient to their instructions (Scollon and Scollon, 2001). Teachers' behavioral expectations of students in the classroom also correspond to the relationships between the (superior) head of a family and the other (subordinate) family members wherein the subordinates show their respect and obedience to the superior in return for his benevolence. As Lee (2001) argues:

> Students usually obey and respect their teachers, whereas teachers generally deal with their students leniently. In fact, teachers commonly control their students with both legitimated authority and Confucian ethical values that are somewhat analogous to those between parents and offspring. (p. 8)

In this way, per Confucian values, students should be dependent on and obedient to their teachers. In this hierarchical relationship, education and communication flow from the teacher to the students, not vice versa; teacher-centered direct instruction is dominant in the Confucian values-based classroom cultural context. This is at odds, however, with the historical development towards student-centered teaching and learning in the West (Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005; Johnson, 1982). The cultural discontinuity between the Confucian-based teacher-centered environment of East Asian students' EFL contexts and the Western, student-centered environment of the ESL context brings about inherent cultural conflicts in the teaching and learning process. Exploring how a PrOCALL approach may facilitate the cross-cultural transition from one classroom context to another was the goal of this study.

Instructional And Research Context

In order to assess the role of PrOCALL on interaction of East Asian students in Kang's Intensive English high-intermediate ESL reading course, at a large Midwestern public research university, Kang, as the course instructor, designed a PrOCALL project that would require her learners to engage in inquiry- and communication-centered classroom interactions. She structured her course to consist of two separate sessions: a traditional reading session (three contact hours) and a PrOCALL lab session (two contact hours) every week. In the PrOCALL lab session, as is typical to PrOCALL approaches, she used computers to supplement her instruction (Lynch, 2000; Macaro, 1997; Sandholtz, Ringstaff and Dwyer, 1997; Warschauer, 1997). She incorporated into her curricula activities that would provide her learners with experiences that she understood, given her findings from a course-administered survey, to be absent in their EFL classroom context, such as interaction-enriching group work, thought-provoking projects, and engaging reading topics and activities. In this way, the web-based activities of the PrOCALL lab session of her course were designed to help learners' become familiar with university ESL classroom norms, such as voice and assertion. The guiding question was:

> At the end of their exposure, how did the PrOCALL approach influence East Asian students with respect to classroom interaction?

Figure 1 represents the three "levels" of learner activity in Kang's course. As will be described below, the PrOCALL lab sessions took place during Levels 2 and 3 of her course design.
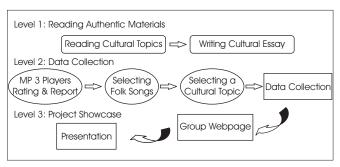
Figure 1. Kang's Three Levels of Instruction (PrOCALL Activity Constitutes Levels 2 and 3)

As Figure 1 illustrates, Level 1 is a pre-project session taking place early on (between weeks 2 and 6 of a 16-week semester) in instruction. Level 1 instruction was designed to be culturally compatible (Tharp, 1989) with that of the learners' previous EFL classroom contexts. Informed by findings of the course survey that indicated teacher-centered instruction in their home countries, Kang practiced teacher-guided instruction that could build upon their previous instructional experiences and help transition them slowly to the ESL classroom culture. During Level 1, learners read authentic materials related to cultures in both the US and their home countries. They visited websites Kang posted on the course website, read online materials, discussed their reading in groups, and participated in a full-class discussion about their reading. At the end of Level 1 activities, in week 6, learners wrote cultural essays that introduced their own cultures through a topic of their choice. As a way of finalizing the pre-PrOCALL session, this assignment emphasized the student-centered approach to come by encouraging learners to assert their individual voices in writing.

Levels 2 and 3 are the heart of the PrOCALL-Based instructional sessions. During this time, Kang had her learners work in small groups on a cultural project that involved two interrelated scenarios and required particular thinking and reading skills (Bloom, 1956; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) to complete identified tasks. These tasks were intended to immerse learners more fully in the university ESL classroom culture as they required extensive interactions with their peers instructor. For example, during Level 2, between weeks 7 and 9, the learners began a data collection activity associated with the following scenario:

The Computer Science Department at a university is planning to purchase MP3 players for cross-cultural projects. The department has narrowed its choice to three MP3 players: iPod, Zune, and Sansa. For their final decision, the faculty wants to hear from a committee of students about their preferences and reasons. The department wants the committee of members of your group to submit a rating report on the players before it makes a decision.

In order to successfully complete the activity, learners first collected and analyzed data about three mp3 players by visiting a specific Google map Kang developed, as well as other websites. From this work, in week 9, they wrote a group rating report. The following week, they began the next step of the project with another scenario:

Now that the Computer Science Department at a university purchased a specific MP3 player for the cross-cultural projects, the department wants a class of students to implement a project with respect to the target culture. This cross-cultural project enhances students' awareness of cultural diversity by comparing the target culture and their own culture.

Here, learners were responsible for selecting folk songs they wanted to download to the mp3 player they had chosen as their favorite. Corresponding to the themes of the songs, they decided on a cultural topic and, for data collection on that topic, explored the internet, in English, for authentic textual and image resources about US culture, their own culture, and a partner's culture. In a subsequent phase of data analysis and synthesis, they reached their own conclusions about similarities and differences. In Level 3, between weeks 12 and 13, learners developed their group webpage in wiki, a website for collaborative project work, with the data gathered in Level 2. They finally showcased their group project in an oral presentation.

Participants

By design, all participants in this study were East Asian students. They were recruited for participation a week before the start of the semester of their enrollment in the Intensive English program. During this orientation period, all Intensive English participants completed the anonymous survey, developed by Kang, that allowed her to collect information on country of origin and previous EFL history,

including reports of teacher-student and student-student interaction and engagement with reading. This information allowed Kang to compare her study participants' backgrounds against those of the larger Intensive English population and understand how representative they were of that larger student pool. Then, all East Asian students placed in Kang's class were invited to take part in this study. They again filled out the same survey, this time not anonymously. From her survey activity, Kang was able to confirm that all East Asian learners in the program, as well as those placed in her course, reported being in teacher-centered learning environments in their EFL contexts. All unanimously stated that they interacted with/responded to the teacher in class only when personally nominated to do so; they reserved their questions for more private interaction after class. Survey responses also indicated that this teacher authority translated into limited opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction. This self-report data provided evidence of the influence of Confucian values on the learners' previous EFL classroom experiences.

From this smaller pool of her own course-assigned students and after doing an initial round of pre-interviews to probe their survey responses, Kang selected four students (with an eye for gender representation and variety of previous English learning experiences) who would serve as focal participants for case study (Table 1).

Data Collection and Analysis

As a product of an East Asian school system who has successfully completed doctoral level study in the US, Kang is intimately familiar with the idea and experience of cultural discontinuity. Using a qualitative approach (Merriam, 1998, 2002, 2009) allowed her to acknowledge

her own subjectivity as being shared with that of the learners whose EFL and ESL experiences she was studying.

Kang employed interviews as one of her primary data collection methods. After the initial interviews in week 2, the case study participants were interviewed two more times (once in weeks 6 and 13) about their experiences with the PrOCALL approach. Interview 2 in week 6 was conducted before the start of the cultural project to explore the influence of the participants' previous EFL classroom participation patterns, as identified in the class survey and initial interviews, on their university Intensive English experience. Interview 3 in week 13 was administered at the end of the web-based project work to find out how the PrOCALL approach had influenced these East Asian learners' classroom interactions. These semi-structured interviews took approximately 20-30 minutes each and were audio recorded. Interview data analysis proceeded on the basis of Merriam's (1998) case study analysis (within-case and cross-case) to explore participants' experiences transitioning to US university ESL classroom culture. To discern and describe the participants' experiences, Kang utilized the previous patterns revealed in the surveys to further probe and clarify the influences of the previous EFL classroom experiences and the new PrCALL approach on the participants' university ESL classroom interactions.

Kang also utilized videotaping to attempt to observe more diverse aspects of classroom interactions that could otherwise escape notice during a single viewing (DuFon, 2002; Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001). Three video cameras with built-in microphones were strategically placed in the classroom: one to capture whole class interaction, another for paired interaction, and a third for small group interaction. These unstructured videotaped observations took place in one of the two 50-minute PrOCALL sessions in weeks 2, 3, 6, 9 and 12. Kang watched the videotapes to inform the interpretation that emerged out of the participant interviews and her own observations, as their instructor. What follows are four narratives of learners' experiences reflecting what she learned, through this process, about cultural discontinuity and the role of her PrOCALL cultural project in facilitating their cross-cultural transition to the university ESL classroom.

Name	Age	Gender	Country of origin/ First language	Previous English Learning
Gloria	21	F	China/Chinese	1year in high school in the U.S. state of Ohio
Harry	21	M	China/Chinese	Learned throughout his K-12 schooling in China
Jesse	18	M	China/Chinese	1 year in an international high school in China
Sean	24	M	Korea/Korean	Learned throughout his K-12 schooling in Korea and in the intensive ESL program for 11 months 2 years ago

Table 1 . Selected Case Study Participants

Cases of East Asian Students' Procall-Facilitated Cross-cultural Transitions: Gloria, Harry, Jesse, And Sean

Gloria in the EFL Classroom: "Teachers were not in my world"

Gloria was born in Dalian, Liaoning, Northeast China. Given her responses to the survey and interview, Gloria had very few interactions with her English teacher in China. Both data sources indicate that she asked questions to the teacher after class if she had them, but, as she clarified in the interview, she never asked questions in English class. She also answered the teacher's questions only when individually asked.

It was obvious when Kang talked with Gloria that she did not want any special attention from the teacher that would result from her inquiries. Apparently, she was reluctant to interact with her teacher for fear that this would create the impression that she was more interested in the lesson than she really was. As she put it:

> *No sentence reason to talk to teacher. Don't want to talk with teacher… Ask[ing] some questions is okay. If she ask me, "Have some questions?," and I ask. If I just ask her some questions, maybe we'll make attention… And the next time she will always point me to answer the questions…*

This quote illustrates how Gloria felt uncomfortable interacting with her teacher. It allows us to understand how her classroom participation in the EFL classroom context was constructed in accordance with Confucian values of authority.

In addition, Gloria more specifically made a point that the class hour was not only given to her but to all others. Because of the paramount burden of the college entrance exam in China, students did not want their teacher to spend too much time answering individual questions. This learning orientation sheds light on how Gloria had internalized Confucian values of educational collectivism over individualism (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) for the sake of collective goals in the classroom.

Gloria's interaction with her peers in her previous EFL classroom, when she was encouraged to interact, was active and goal-oriented. She indicated, in her survey response, that she and her peers helped one another understand the meaning of reading material. This might indicate that Gloria was cooperative with her peers in order to meet classroom expectations.

Gloria in the ESL Classroom: "Discussions are challenging in English"

Gloria's verbal interaction with her partner, Yvette, was very active from the beginning of this study. In formal interaction in coursework-related discussion, Gloria and Yvette would talk very closely with frequent nods, hand gestures, and even caring physical touch, such as hair and hand touch, and make frequent eye contact. Gloria said that she was collaborative with Yvette to sustain a harmonious work setting, seeming to make an effort to be in agreement about their group work. In informal interaction, such as chatting, Kang often observed Gloria and Yvette to whisper something inaudible to each other in Chinese. Once done with the day's group work in class, they would talk softly but actively to each other in Chinese. Kang would attempt to verify her understanding by asking them whether they were discussing the day's assignment. Their answer was "No," and then, "We're done!" It seemed to be challenging for Gloria to stay away from speaking in Chinese in the ESL classroom especially when working with a partner from the same country.

Later in the PrOCALL approach, Gloria herself expressed how much she liked working with a partner, exchanging questions and ideas. She said, "…I'm confused about the difference. I will ask Yvette… She can give me some advice." When in conflict in their work with each other, Gloria and Yvette made an effort to search for supplementary information together on the internet, continuing their discussion to come up with a mutually acceptable outcome.

During this period, Gloria also showed much improved and voluntary interaction with Kang. It turned out her interaction pattern with Kang throughout this study was almost the opposite to that of her previous patterns in the EFL classroom. Video 4 provided an example of her distinct reaction: "(Right before class started, Gloria approached Kang.) I want to know what day is the final test… because I bought the airplane [tickets]…" She rarely voluntarily talked

about her personal life at the beginning of the course, while, as can be seen in the excerpt above, she seemed to gradually change her pattern of interaction with Kang, her instructor, after exposure to PrOCALL.

In her last interview, Gloria maintained that she still found formal group discussion/project work difficult. In addition to her responsibilities for cooperative work with a partner, she couldn't help but speak in Chinese due to lack of knowledge in choosing appropriate English words relevant to a context. Except for what should actually be written on their report or other assignments, she sustained her interaction using Chinese, especially with Yvette, in their group work. It was obvious that, in Levels 2 and 3, with more student-centered activities provided, her own language enabled her to overcome the cultural discontinuity of her previous socialization into silence.

Harry in the EFL Classroom: "The Chinese follow Confucian Values"

Born in XiangTan, Hunan, in Southern China, Harry was, like Gloria, a typical insider of East-Asian Confucian values. Harry, in his interviews, was able to vividly portray the nature of Confucian-inspired classroom values. The following quote is an example of how he was able to connect his classroom experiences to values learned about appropriate relationships with teachers. In it, he describes the norms for interaction around questions in English class:

> [I asked questions] after class. Only after class… I think it's also basically our country environment. Because we most of us think if you interrupt teacher's talking, it's very bad thing… It's not polite. You should respect your teacher… Yes, my parents told me… parents and teacher also said that.

Despite his awareness of having to show respect to his teacher by being obedient and listening, he was unusual among my case study participants in the way he talked about eye contact. Harry, both from Kang's own observation of him in class and by his own description, made good eye contact with his teachers when talking to them. He maintained that this practice was just his "habit." Perhaps his practice of making eye contact with his teachers, despite the Confucian cultural norms that would advise otherwise, is an example of his living another one of

his parents' teaching. His own "habit," which went against the norm, may exemplify an independent streak in his otherwise very well-mannered, gentlemanly, demeanor.

Unlike his relationship to the teacher, Harry described, in his interview and survey responses, that he and his peers interacted with one another to help understand the meaning of reading materials, as well as English grammar and vocabulary from the reading.

Harry in the ESL Classroom: "I can't explain in English"

In interacting with his peers in group discussion, Harry would be patient listening to the other members in discussion and then, only after a member's turn, would he bring his own opinion or inquiries into the discussion. As he told Kang in his interview, he would not forget to ask questions like "What are you think[ing] about this part, or any advice to me?" He believed he could learn more from others' different ideas, saying, "If you can discuss with your partner or your friend one by one, and you will get more than two ideas."

In his interview, Harry told Kang he believed that, during his interaction to solve problems in group work, he made use of discussions in English to enhance English skills. In this way, he was very clear about the benefits from the formal interaction of discussion. He was coming to realize, for himself, the authentic benefits of using English in English class. Unlike Gloria, however, during the pre-project session, he was almost never involved in any types of informal, off-task interaction, such as chatting.

Later, Harry situated himself as willing to be involved in more informal interaction, which he himself identified as its effect on his own changes. He said, "… [In the beginning of the semester] … I didn't want to talk to other people, because I don't think it's really need to. But, now even it's not necessary, I prefer to talk with them…"

The PrOCALL approach, however, did pose some challenges to Harry. For example, he noted how English vocabulary and pronunciation caused him trouble in verbal interaction. To assist them in their struggles, Harry explained that he and his peers used a dictionary, looking for appropriate words to use in order to help one another understand their intended meaning. At the same time that Harry was attempting to stick to speaking English, it was as well challenging for him to ignore chances to speak in

Chinese. Aside from Kang's own observations, the videos recorded in Levels 2 and 3 of a project session (in which conversations were mostly inaudible) revealed that he predominantly spoke in Chinese. Like Gloria, his own language became a tool to help him transition to the ESL classroom culture.

Jesse in the EFL Classroom: "Teachers were Strangers to me"

Jesse is from Suzhou, Jiangsu, in Eastern China. Jesse's responses to Kang's inquiry about classroom interaction in his previous EFL classroom were very unique as opposed to those of Gloria and Harry in that he used the word "strange" to describe his relationship with his classroom teacher. Jesse explained that he felt uncomfortable interacting with his teacher for the answers to his questions, saying, "I think it's more comfortable if I ask my classmates. Because when we talk with a teacher I feel a little bit strange." The word "strange" in his response implies that interaction and communication between the teacher and Jesse happened infrequently, and also denotes that the classroom was ruled by the Confucian hierarchical relationships between the teacher and students which, perhaps, Jesse now knew was different than in the U.S. Even though Jesse thought it was permitted to ask his EFL teacher questions, because of this discomfort, he only asked questions after class. Further, he did not want to interrupt the teacher's talk. As he told Kang, "In class my teacher told very fast so I don't want to stop." His disposition in his previous EFL classroom appeared very similar to that of Harry's assessment of his teacher's privileges to talk in class. This reluctance to interact with his teacher over questions led Jesse to respond to the teacher's questions only when personally asked. Despite his unique use of the word, "strange," still, however, Jesse's classroom experiences in the Chinese high school in China were very similar to those of Gloria and Harry.

Students in his class worked on their own for the day's assignment without class activities. He indicated that he discussed his reading with peers only to answer the questions the teacher asked of the class. According to both survey and interview responses, he was involved in extrinsically-motivated interaction with peers, helping one another understand the meaning of reading materials, as well as English grammar and vocabulary from those readings.

Jesse in the ESL Classroom: "Just on our Project"

Early in PrOCALL, Jesse mostly maintained his previous pattern of interaction with a classroom teacher, although he showed his willingness to take part in more formal interaction, such as open discussion, with Kang in the larger context of the classroom. Later, Jesse mostly sustained his previous patterns of classroom interaction in the way that he was more dynamically involved in the interaction with peers than with Kang, his instructor, seeking to meet teacher's expectations without strong motivation to engage in personal interaction.

Regarding the formal interaction of coursework-related discussion, Jesse told Kang that it not only helped him advance his speaking and listening skills, but also made reading more interesting especially when group members had divergent ideas. He explained, "Maybe, he [my partner] will think another way. So, …[we] can make the reading more interesting... because we all have our opinion and then we can make our partner to be agree with that…" Discussion also helped him understand reading better by catching on parts he might miss from a text. The challenges Jesse encountered in this period of early PrOCALL adoption were related to English vocabulary, which Gloria and Harry pointed out as well. Jesse more specifically explained that, on occasion, he did not know the words to be used in their discussion.

As PrOCALL exposure lengthened, in Levels 2 and 3 of a project session, Jesse mostly maintained his early interaction patterns. When Kang asked him about any change in his classroom interaction, as a result of PrOCALL, he simply replied, "The same." Expanding a little further, he contended, "The project is the only thing I need to do." Clearly, here Jesse's understanding of the relevance of PrOCALL to his English learning is still framed in terms of fulfilling class expectations consistent with the skills-based learning orientation in his previous EFL classroom.

Throughout his exposure to the PrOCALL approach, there were ongoing challenges for Jesse. First, English pronunciation made it difficult for him to understand

conversation. Influenced by their native languages, his peers from different countries pronounced the same English word differently. As he shared with me:

> *I think understanding is the most difficult... Maybe, there is a new word and when we speak English,… it's different… Chinese and Korean to speak English. Some Indonesia students, they say the to da…*

Another struggle with English proficiency was, as he reiterated in his last interview, a lack of vocabulary. This challenge at the linguistic level made Jesse decide to choose Chinese when having to explain something complicated to his group partner, Harry. He had to strive to keep up with class discussion. Like Gloria and Harry, Jesse spoke more frequently in Chinese to his Chinese peers in their interaction, taking advantage of speaking his own language as a way of transitioning to the ESL classroom norms.

Sean in the EFL Classroom: "I only read the book"

Sean, coming from Anyang, Gyunggi, in South Korea, was not involved in any interactions with his teacher in his English reading class in high school. It was not unheard of for students to ask questions in class, according to Sean. But, for Sean, he reserved his questions until after class and was reluctant to interact with his teacher for fear that the teacher would discover his low English proficiency. As he shared with Kang: "[I] didn't want to ask a lot to the teacher. Because I thought when the teacher answer the question and if I can't understand, it means that my skills are poor…" Because of his self-conscious reaction, Sean said he sought support from a private tutor at home to answer his questions. In line with this guarded interaction pattern, he responded to the teacher only when individually nominated, avoiding eye contact. During teacher talk, he only looked at the board and made notes. As he put it:

> *Teachers want student to look at the book. Otherwise, teacher thought students are not concentrate… In reading section, [I] only read the book… I was looking on the blackboard, not the teacher… because I have to note some information teacher wrote on the blackboard…*

Again, unlike the other cases in this study, Sean's inactivity in interaction with his teachers was extended to the relationship with his peers. In his survey and interview responses, Sean affirmed that he did not take part in any interaction with his peers at all in English reading class.

Sean in the ESL Classroom: "Nothing but the project"

During the course of this study, as was true in Jesse's case, Sean did not interact with Kang except unusual after-class questions largely about class information. He did not attempt to partake in open discussion in PrOCALL instruction. However, he made a difference in his interaction with peers as a result of PrOCALL activities. At the start of the PrOCALL session, Sean never initiated a conversation with his peers nor expressed any eagerness to take part in large group discussion. His brief interactions took place in a very straightforward manner, only during group work such as data compilation and discussion. Kang also noted, in discussion, that Sean was so passive that he usually accepted others' opinion. He said, "Usually just accept and… I don't know how can I do, what should I do in this situation."

Further elaborating his inactive role in group decision-making in Levels 2 and 3 of a project session, Sean described how he just let others identify the project topic. But, Sean understood, at least, hypothetically what linguistic and social benefits could be derived from that approach to learning. As he said, "Discuss[ion] with other classmate is good because I can improve my speaking. I think it's kind of another way to familiar with together."

A definite challenge in this web-based group work, for Sean, was listening and speaking in English. When he asked questions of his partners, he said they answered in an unexpected way because of their misunderstanding. As he said, "When I ask about the topic, my classmate doesn't understand. And also when my classmate asks me about that, I can't explain it. I don't understand."

It was not just English proficiency and a passive nature that challenged Sean's interactions with his peers; the very nature of group work was difficult for him. He could not finish the project as soon as he would have liked to because he had to wait until his peers completed their parts. Besides, he often had to work even more to finish up the project to his satisfaction. He complained, "I have to wait and I spend more time because their data was not very clear, so I have

to fix them."

In his last interview, Sean exhibited pervasive negative attitudes regarding his interaction as a result of PrOCALL, saying, "In my opinion, almost the same... I think no change. [At the] beginning of [the] semester, maybe I was shy and I didn't talk with them too much. And, I think still I'm not enough speaking in class..." As the only non-Chinese in this study, Sean spoke only in English and, toward the end of the project work, it was obvious that his interaction patterns with his group partners had remained the same over the course of the semester.

Discussion

In terms of early effects of PrOCALL on classroom interactions, the case study participants responded to the PrOCALL instruction in their own ways. In one-on-one interaction with the instructor, Gloria was actively involved in interacting with Kang, as opposed to her previous EFL stance of having no teacher contact. Harry maintained his previous pattern of willingness to interact with the instructor. Jesse and Sean, however, showed their previous patterns of reluctance. In terms of their interaction with peers, all the participants showed improvement from previous extrinsic, goal-oriented patterns of peer interaction to a little more intrinsically-motivated interaction in discussion.

In terms of later effects of PrOCALL on classroom interactions, all the case study participants, except Sean, noted that it produced improvements in their class discussion by making them more cooperative.

Admittedly, just because most of the case study participants noted positive changes in their interaction as a result of PrOCALL does not mean that its use was easy for them. The biggest challenge in using this approach, as reported by all participants, was limited English language skills, such as English vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, and listening/speaking proficiency. Because of these limitations, in more challenging classroom situations, the participants tended to communicate with one another in their native language, when they could, to discuss data and their project. The challenges posed by their limited English language proficiency also meant being cooperative and patient with web-based group work was difficult, as students were both

having to negotiate a new, communicative approach to their English language learning while also confronting their lack of adequate linguistic resources to do so. Since English education in East Asian countries focuses on preparing students for high stakes college entrance exams more than on improving students' communicative competence, not just the practices of but even the idea of a communicative classroom culture was part of their cross-cultural transition.

The idea of using PrOCALL as a transition tool is called for by the increasing numbers of East Asian learners studying in American higher education institutions. Students from China and South Korea, such as Gloria, Harry, Sean, and Jesse, represent the nations sending the most numbers of international undergraduates (Wilhelm, 2011) and these numbers, particularly for China, are expected to grow as "more Chinese families become able to afford to send their children to study abroad" (para. 3). These data clearly indicate the dramatic prevalence of East Asian students on US campuses and their continued growth as part of the US higher education enterprise. Serving them well, by providing them with intentional opportunities to acquire not just English language skills and knowledge about US culture, but, moreover, scaffolded practice in acculturating to US classroom norms, is our challenge and our privilege.

With the information these case studies provide, as researchers and instructors, we are better able to understand how particular aspects of our taken-for-granted US classroom culture may pose deep and abiding challenges to these learners, challenges that, we believe, it is our responsibility, especially given their increasing presence on our college campuses, to address. It stands to reason that insufficient English proficiency and insufficient knowledge of US teaching and learning culture will make the transition to the ESL university classroom take longer. Given what we learned from the case studies, we are hopeful that well-designed PrOCALL approaches in university ESL environments may create a positive change in the way these learners interact with others and understand cultural differences in the classroom. Findings also suggest, however, that the Confucian-inspired educational value systems in which East Asian students are socialized are likely to be too ingrained to be influenced by

a short-term educational intervention such as the one Kang used here. Cultural values around student-teacher interaction and teacher-directed instruction may be aspects of the cross-cultural transition that will take a long time to resocialize. The development of long-term collaborative partnerships with US language educators and those in East Asian countries will be necessary in fully understanding, articulating, and pro-actively mobilizing to address the impact of cultural discontinuity on East Asian students, to help them learn how to learn in the setting of the US university classroom. Fortunately, the idea and infrastructure of a PrOCALL-based transition tool is one that, leveraging the advantages of the World Wide Web, can bring these "world wide" educators together.

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