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Micro-pedagogical contexts in English conversation classes: A comparative study of Thai learners' interactions with Thai and non-Thai teachers*

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Abstract

The study aims at investigating Thai learners' interactions with Thai and non-Thai teachers in English conversation classes, and discovering the kinds of micro-pedagogical contexts constructed in these classes. Participants were 19 learners in the 3rd year vocational certificate English program who were enrolled in the English for Business Communication course, taught by a Thai teacher, and English Conversation II, taught by a British teacher. The classroom interactions videotaped from both classes were transcribed and analyzed following the convention of Conversation Analysis (CA). The findings revealed that the micro-pedagogical contexts constructed in the classes with Thai and non-Thai teachers included: procedural, form-and-accuracy, and meaning-and-fluency contexts. Most of the class time was spent on meaning-and-fluency contexts. The Thai teacher mainly talked in Thai and spent a significant amount of time on explaining task procedures before doing class activities. Feedback was mainly given on word choice. The non-Thai teacher, on the other hand, was brief about the procedures but more elaborate on examples of anticipated interactions, repaired not only word choice but pronunciation, and consistently gave positive feedback to learners' contributions. Both teachers apparently spent most of the class time in the meaning-and-fluency context even though the proportion was higher in the class with the non-Thai teacher. The latter not only engaged the learners in class interactions by asking them questions, but by doing exercises and playing games. It was additionally found that the turns constructed by the learners in every context were mostly in the form of either single words or simple sentences.

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Therefore, to enhance the learners' interactional contributions, more challenging questions should be asked which require the learners to supply more complex responses. The findings of the study carry important implications for the employment of Thai and non-Thai teachers in teaching English conversation courses and for the development of pedagogical intervention plans to enhance the efficacy of the teaching methods adopted by both groups of teachers to improve English language learners' oral communication skills.

Keywords: Classroom interactions; form-and-accuracy context; meaning-and-fluency context; procedural context; teacher-learner interactions; Thai and non-Thai teachers

Introduction

Undoubtedly, English is an especially important medium of communication in the globalization age. While not widely spoken in Thailand by native Thais and serving few official roles in the mainstream context in Thailand, it is the first foreign language for children to learn in the Thai education system with the focus on improving all the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, despite learning English from kindergarten to university, the majority of Thai learners are infamously known for having low English proficiency, especially for effective oral communication (Bruner, Shimray, & Sinwongsuwat, 2014; Khamkhien, 2010). In fact, the English proficiency of Thai learners was reportedly lower than several other countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Atagi, 2011; Bruner, Shimray & Sinwongsuwat, 2014; Education First, 2012; Khamkhien, 2010; Noom-ura, 2013; Prapphal, 2001).

Although the Ministry of Education (2011) attempted to raise Thai learners' awareness of the importance of English speaking in preparing for the ASEAN community, the problem still persists, since most learners have failed to put their language knowledge acquired in class into communicative practice in real-life situations. Many studies have particularly reported that Thai learners have problems with using what is taught in communication (Khamkhien, 2010; Khuvasanond, Sildus, Hurford & Lipka, 2010; Punthumasen, 2007), and a number of factors have been shown to contribute to the problem. For instance, most English teachers in Thailand are Thai native speakers and often use Thai in English teaching (Bruner et al., 2014; Khamkhien, 2010; Wanchai 2012). Additionally, Thai learners mostly feel anxious, shy and reluctant to speak the language not used outside the classroom, making them lack English speaking fluency (Kongkerd, 2013). Moreover, classroom size in Thailand is generally large and the class time is limited often to 50 minutes a session; therefore, learners have little time and few opportunities to engage in communicative activities

planned for their language practice in the classroom (Darasawang, 2007; Dhanasobhon, 2006; Islam & Bari, 2012).

Stressing the importance of developing oral communicative competence, the Basic Education Core Curriculum requires Thai learners to master English listening and speaking skills first and foremost (Ministry of Education, 2008). Teachers are encouraged to create communicative activities which allow them to use the language more in the classroom, so that they will not feel uncomfortable when speaking it in real life (Graham, 2009; Richards, 2006). These activities should also prepare them for genuine real-life communication (Little, 1998), bringing the real world into the classroom (Brown, 2001; Kirkpatrick & Ghaemi, 2011). Moreover, to address the problems with class size and limited class time while encouraging more communication, teachers may need to provide learners with opportunities to do more pair and group speaking activities (Darasawang, 2007; Dhanasobhon, 2006; Islam & Bari, 2012; Seangboon, 2002).

Additionally, to enhance Thai learners' speaking proficiency, many educational institutions have been hiring non-Thai teachers to teach conversation classes. Teachers who are native speakers are often viewed as the model of correct or acceptable English (Braine, 2010; Cook, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Wang, 2012). Native speakers have good oral communication skills, a wide range of vocabulary, and knowledge about their own culture; therefore, they are believed to have advantages over non-native speakers in teaching the target language (Mahboob, 2003; Medgyes, 1994). Native speaker teachers were also often viewed as being friendly and lively, good models for imitation and more skillful in encouraging learners to speak (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Wu & Ke, 2009).

However, there are also disadvantages of having native speaker teachers, given that their speech could be difficult for second language learners to understand and they could have difficulty in explaining complex grammar (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Mahboob, 2003). In most cases, native speakers lack explicit knowledge to explain such aspects of their language as lexis and grammar (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005). They may also lack understanding of the local education context and fail to establish rapport with learners. Often, different cultural backgrounds reportedly cause misunderstanding between these teachers and learners (Han, 2005; McCrostie, 2010; Wu & Ke, 2009). Moreover, hiring native speaker teachers is often more costly than non-native ones (Brundage, 2007; Han, 2005; Luo, 2007).

Non-native teachers sharing learners' L1, on the other hand, have similar cultural knowledge, allowing them to better assist learners in understanding both linguistic and cultural

content of the lesson (Cheung & Braine, 2007; Clark & Paran, 2007; Walkinshaw & Duong, 2014). They also share socio-pragmatic norms of interaction such as turn-taking, topic selection, which may reduce miscommunication (Arva & Medgyes, 2000, Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012). Non-native teachers will also help develop learners' fluency and communicative competence as they strictly attend to the language forms they produce and provide them with comprehensible feedback (Mahboob, 2003; Merino, 1997). They are also often valued for their ability to explain grammatical points in L1 when required, plan their lesson thoroughly, prepare students for the exam, and also able to act as models of successful second language learners (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Cheung & Braine, 2007; Cook, 2005; Lee, 2000).

While there are both advantages and disadvantages of having native and non-native teachers teach English to L2 learners depending on such factors as learners' proficiency and skills being taught (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Walkinshaw & Duong, 2014), it is no doubt that the population of non-native teachers remain far bigger than that of native teachers in the Thai context. In the majority of teaching contexts it is in fact not affordable to hire native teachers despite the fact that they reportedly have the edge over non-native ones, especially in teaching English conversation. Therefore, to maximize the human resources available, apart from surveying learners' different learning experiences with native and non-native teachers as reported in previous literature (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Braine, 2010; Cook, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Mahboob, 2003; Wang, 2012; Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012; Wu & Ke, 2009), it is necessary to look into what is going on in the classroom as learners are interacting or being taught with the two groups of teachers, to determine the strengths to enhance and the weaknesses to overcome, especially for non-native teachers.

Conversation Analysis (CA) and Investigation of Classroom Interaction

Conversation Analysis (CA) is an important approach to the study of natural conversation, with the aim to determine talk participants' orientation in the construction of turns at talk to accomplish social actions in different settings (Seedhouse, 2004; Sinwongsuwat, 2007). CA particularly examines recorded, naturally occurring conversation to discover how participants understand and respond to one another in their turns at talk, with a central focus on how sequences of action are generated. Recorded data of naturally-occurring talk-in-interaction are examined and analyzed through a fine-grained transcription system. Adopting the CA approach to studying classroom interaction, Seedhouse (2004) has identified three

types of classroom interaction contexts (i.e., procedural, form-and-accuracy, and meaning-and-fluency contexts) and described turn taking that takes place in these contexts.

Procedural context is the classroom context in which teachers inform learners about procedures necessary for carrying out tasks or activities planned. The learners are often given opportunities in this context to interact with the teachers such that task or activity goals can be achieved.

The form-and-accuracy context focuses on accurate production of linguistic forms taught. Teachers require learners to produce precise linguistic forms which are linguistically correct and appropriate. It is often characterized by teacher control and initiating repair of Ls' utterances. However, this context can also be maintained by the class participants. For instance, after teachers have prepared learners by practicing asking and answering questions using certain linguistic forms, the teacher may not take part in the interaction.

The meaning-and-fluency context focuses on meaning and learners' fluency promoted by maximizing the opportunities for their interaction in the classroom. Therefore, learners are required to express their content knowledge through interaction while the teacher acts as a mediator, encouraging a smooth flow of utterances and conversation.

Adopting the CA approach to studying classroom interaction as suggested in Seedhouse (2004), this paper aims at comparing Thai learners' interactions with Thai and non-Thai teachers in English conversation classes. A close examination of classroom interaction will allow us to see how pedagogical plans to develop learners' speaking skills are realized and how learning takes place or is hindered in classes conducted by the two groups of teachers. The investigation of learners' interactions with their teachers and with each other can ultimately help improve their learning experience. The study especially hopes to shed light on strategies to enhance classroom teaching capacity of English conversation teachers, both native and non-native, as they are attempting to improve the learning experience and enhance communication skills of Thai learners in the mainstream context.

Research Purposes

The study examined interactions between learners and Thai and non-Thai teachers in English conversation classrooms. The main purposes are:

1) To discover the kinds of micro contexts constructed in English classroom interactions;

2) To compare Thai learners' interactions with Thai and non-Thai teachers in these contexts of English conversation classrooms;

3) To unveil recurrent patterns and problems of interactions found in these contexts.

Research Questions

The following questions are formulated based on the research purposes presented:

1) What kinds of micro contexts are constructed in the classes with Thai and non-Thai teachers: procedural, form-and-accuracy, or meaning-and-fluency contexts?

2) What are recurrent patterns found in Thai learners' interactional contributions to class interactions with Thai and non-Thai teachers in these contexts?

3) Are there any differences between the recurring patterns of learners' interactional contributions found in the micro contexts of classes with Thai and non-Thai teachers? If so, what are they?

Research Methodology

This is a primarily qualitative study aiming to compare Thai learners' interaction with Thai and non-Thai teachers in English conversation classes.

1. **Participants**

The participants were 19 learners in the 3rd year vocational certificate English program at Hat Yai Commercial Technological College, Songkhla. The age average of the learners was 18 years old. The learner participants were enrolled in English Conversation II, taught by a British teacher with five years of experience in teaching English to elementary–high school learners in Thailand. The Thai teacher, on the other hand, had ten years of teaching experience. He has taught such courses as English for Business Communication, English for Real Life I and II, English for Commerce, English for Hospitality, as well as English for Newspaper Reading.

2. **Data-Collection Procedures**

2.1 Video recording of classroom interactions

Interactions between the learners and Thai vs. non-Thai teachers in the English conversation classes, each lasting 50 minutes, were recorded during the second semester of the academic year 2015 for subsequent transcription. Ten class sessions were recorded over the course of a semester: five classes before and after the midterm. During the class period, two video cameras were set up: one in front of the classroom to capture students' interaction and the other at the back of the room to capture what was going on in the front of the class especially the teacher's teaching.

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2.2 Class observation

Class observation was performed and field notes were taken to assure the accuracy of the analysis of the interactions recorded. The researcher attended every class and also brought along a personal video camera to record class behavior relevant to the interpretation of the learners' interactional contributions.

2.3 Data Analysis

To answer the three research questions, the classroom interactions videotaped from both classes were transcribed following the transcription convention adopted by Seedhouse (2004) and Schegloff (2007), and later analyzed according to the CA methodology.

Results and discussion

1. Micro-Pedagogical Contexts Constructed in English Conversation Classes

The analysis of the videotaped interactions revealed that the teachers and leaners in both classes co-constructed all the different types of contexts investigated with different proportions. Ten class sessions were recorded over the period of 50 minutes each, and the average time the Thai teacher spent on his teaching was approximately 48 minutes, while the English teacher spent 49 minutes a session. Table 1 shows the proportion of all the three types of micro-pedagogical contexts described in Seedhouse (2004) which were constructed on average in the conversation classes with a Thai and a non-Thai teacher, including procedural, form-and-accuracy, and meaning-and-fluency contexts. The table also includes other contexts with no interaction between teacher and students, which were either pedagogically relevant or irrelevant. Pedagogically relevant contexts entailed those in which students worked on some class exercises with little interaction in the target language. Pedagogically unrelated contexts, on the other hand, were, for instance, those in which the learners asked the teachers for permission to get out of the classroom, or when the teachers waited for the learners to take their own seats.

Table 1: The Micro-pedagogical Contexts Constructed in English Conversation Classes with Thai and Non-Thai Teachers

Micro Pedagogical Contexts	Procedural	Form-and-Accuracy	Meaning-and-Fluency	Other Contexts	
				Pedagogically relevant	Pedagogically irrelevant
Thai Teachers	8.82%	1.64%	48.00%	38.19%	3.35%
Non-Thai Teachers	6.29%	3.10%	54.69%	34.22%	1.70%

1.1 Procedural context

The procedural context, as shown in Table 1, was constructed in the two classrooms between the learners and the two teachers with different proportions. On average, the Thai teacher spent 8.82% of the whole class time with task procedures, while the English teacher spent only 6.29% of the class time, allowing for more opportunities for learners to interact in other contexts. The Thai teacher apparently focused more on explaining the task procedures to make sure the learners understand them before doing the class activities, while the British teacher was brief about the procedures but tried to ensure the learners' understanding through examples of anticipated interactions. The Thai teacher could have spent less time on explaining the task procedures, which would allow the learners more time to do the other class activities.

1.2 Form-and-accuracy context

The form-and-accuracy context, in which the learners' response was grammatically repaired by the teacher, constituted only 1.64% and 3.10% of the entire class interaction with the Thai and the British teacher respectively. Even though the proportional difference might not be significant, the two teachers differed in that while both teachers repaired the learners' utterances due to their inappropriate word choice, the British teacher also performed a repair prompted by the learners' incorrect pronunciation. In fact, it was primarily the learners' accent that prompted the British teacher's repair since it was so different from his that any pronunciation errors would become easily noticeable.

1.3 Meaning-and-fluency context

Both teachers apparently spent most of the class time on the meaning-and-fluency context, which corresponds to the class goals, which are to get the learners to converse in English. However, the proportion was higher in the class with the British teacher. As shown in the table above, in the class with the Thai teacher, the learners were given the opportunities to interact primarily by being asked questions individually. On the other hand, the British teacher not only asked them questions, but engaged them in doing exercises and playing games.

1.4 Other Contexts

On average, more time was spent in the two classes on pedagogically related than unrelated contexts; for instance, when the learners were allowed to do oral communicative activities in which they could practice what they learned by themselves, as well as when they were allowed to do assignments and exercises with sheets/handouts given on their own without interventions. However, pedagogically unrelated contexts were

noticeably constructed more in the class with the Thai teacher. Since the teacher and learners share the first language, they tended to talk in their L1 about subjects irrelevant to the pedagogical plans.

2. Teacher Talk and Teacher-Learner Interactions in the Micro-Pedagogical Contexts Constructed in English Conversation Classes

The teacher talk and teacher-learner interactions in these micro-pedagogical contexts were characterized by the following features illustrated through the following excerpts.

2.1 Procedural context

At the beginning of the class, the Thai teacher reviewed the learning lesson from the previous session, asking them to identify the type of sentences before doing the next class activity**.**

(1) Thai learners' interactions with Thai teacher

[0:01-0:40]

1.T:วันนี้เราจะมาทบทวนเพื่อการเก็บคะแนนในครั้งต่อไป ((tr.: Today, we are going to
2.review for the next assignment)) ((T writes "question" and "answer" on the
3.whiteboard)) เรามีหน้าที่ identify ก่อน identify แปลว่าอะไร ((tr.: First, you have to
4.identify it. What does identify mean?))
5.LL: ระบุ ((To indicate))
6.T:ระบุ แยกแยะ เรามีหน้าที่ identify ก่อนว่าประโยคนี้อยู่ในส่วนของ question หรือ answer
7.อาจารย์จะเรียกเลขที่ number ten ((tr.: To indicate. First, you have to identify the
8.sentence that it is question or answer. I will call your number, number ten))

As shown in the excerpt above, which illustrates a procedural context, in line 1 the teacher first informed the students of the overall objective of the lesson, which is to review the lesson for the next activity. Then, in line 3, the teacher asked the learners a question to ensure their understanding of the task procedures. The learners' minimal responses to the teacher's question in line 5 shows their attention to his talk. In line 6, the teacher confirmed their response and started numerically calling the students to perform the task by identifying a sentence in question. The teacher's talk was mainly in Thai with code mixing of English words.

(2) Thai learners' interactions with non-Thai teacher

[0:01-0:25]

1. T: First thing I will let you play the game, are you ready?
2. LL: Yes.
3. T: OK. I go to market and I buy A for apple.
4. What can you buy for B? ((T shows an action))
5. LL: Banana.
6. T: Great. Banana. What can you buy for C?

The procedural context was also constructed in the classroom context between the learners' and a British teacher. As shown in the excerpt above, the teacher started the class by telling them what to do in English, and the learners expressed their readiness for the activity in line 2 in the target language. In line 3, the teacher then gave the learner a model of what to say in their answer to his question.

2.2 Form-and-accuracy context

In the following excerpts, the learners' interactions with both teachers in the form-and-accuracy context are illustrated.

(3) Thai learners' interactions with Thai teacher

This excerpt was taken from the lesson on making an appointment**.**

[33:47-34:03]

1. T: Fah. What time are you available?
2. L: On eight.
3. T: At is better.
4. L: At eight.
5. T: Morning, afternoon, or evening?
6. L: Morning.
7. T: Great.

As shown in the excerpt above, in line 1 the teacher called one learner to answer his question. The learner responded in line 2, but the answer was produced with an incorrect linguistic form. The teacher then repaired the response in line 3, while the teacher's turn in line 5 also indicated that he treated the learner's answer as being ambiguous, thus eliciting a repair at line 6. This is an instance of the teacher's form-and-accuracy focus in a primary meaning-and-fluency context.

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While the Thai teacher focused more on word choice, the British teacher also seemed to pay attention to students' pronunciation as well. In the excerpt below, the learners are engaged in a game in which they must say words which begin with the letter A-Z.

(4) Thai learners' interactions with non-Thai teacher

[4:05-4:26]

1. T: Q?
2. L: Queen.
3. LL: ((laugh))
4. T: Queen is correct but you should say queen apple, that's the apple. ((Queen is
5. inappropriate in response to the sentence "*I go to market and I buy…"))* R?
6. L: Labbit.
7. T: It's wrong pronunciation, you should say rabbit.
8. LL: Rabbit.

As shown in the excerpt above, the teacher got the learners to think of two words in response to his sentence "*I go to market and I buy …"* with Q and R initials, as in lines 1 and 5. The students' first response at line 2 was repaired since it does not match the semantic content of the sentence prompt. When the teacher elicits words with R, the learner gave the right answer but with wrong pronunciation which gets repaired by the teacher for the whole class in 6. The teacher therefore focused on both form and meaning in this excerpt.

2.3 Meaning-and-fluency context

In the following excerpts, the learners' interactions with both teachers in the meaning-and-fluency context are illustrated. The following excerpts were taken from the lesson on making an appointment**.**

(5) Thai learners' interactions with Thai teacher

[32:19-33:30]

1. T: How about at my house?
2. L5: Yes, it's good idea.
3. T: Yes, it's good idea. When could we meet?
4. L5: ((silent))
5. T: How about next week?
6. L5: Sorry, I have to visit my friend.
7. T: Great.
8. LL: ((clap their hands))

The meaning-and-fluency context, promoting the learners' construction of turns with a smooth flow of content, was obviously shown in excerpt (5). The designated learner was asked to express their content knowledge through the interaction prompted by the teacher's question in lines 1, 3 and 5. When his turn was treated as problematic by the learner, indicated a pause or silence, the teacher performed a self-repair, as in line 5, so that the learner could continue the interaction.

In the classroom interaction between the learners and a British teacher, the meaning-and-fluency context was also constructed. As shown in the excerpt below, the teacher started by having learners ask him questions in order to achieve the learning goals. The learners were encouraged to proceed with their questions, as shown in lines 6, 8 and 12. Obviously, the teacher not only responded to the learner's question but also provided a prompt for the learners to continue the interaction, as in line 4, in which he offered a question word cue and in line 5 constructed a partial turn for the students to complete (Sinwongsuwat, 2007). It was shown that the learners were being encouraged to ask him questions about his life when the teacher not only supplied the answers but also provided a positive assessment, as in lines 10 and 14.

(6) Thai learners' interactions with non-Thai teacher

[19:23-21:20]

1. T: OK, anybody asks me questions.
2. L: What is your favourite band?
3. T: My favourite band is Bodyslam.
4. OK, when?
5. When is your
6. L: birthday?
7. T: Birthday, 20th of June 19 bla bla bla. Where?
8. L: Where do you stay?
9. T: I stay near the park.
10. Very good question.
11. Why?
12. L: Why do you stay here?
13. LL: ((laugh))
14. T: Because I can take my dog for walking.Very good question.OK, you get the
15. idea.

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3. The Differences between the recurring patterns of Thailearners' interactional contributions found in different micro-contexts of the two classes

Table 2 compares recurring patterns of learners' interactional contributions found in the different micro contexts in the classes with the two teachers. The transcripts of the videotaped interactions from ten classes were closely examined and the patterns of the learners' interactional contributions were identified in terms of the characteristics of the turn constructional units (TCUs) constructed by the learners. It was found that all the turns constructed by the learners in the two classes were of the single-unit type and that the TCUs are in the form of either single words or simple sentences as shown in the table below.

Table 2: Patterns of Thai Learners' Interactions with Thai and Non-Thai Teachers in Different Micro-pedagogical Contexts

Micro Pedagogical Contexts	Procedural		Form-and-Accuracy		Meaning-and-Fluency	
	Word	Simple Sentence	Word	Simple Sentence	Word	Simple Sentence
Interactions with Thai Teachers	4.94%	2.76%	2.47%	2.18%	22.84%	64.81%
Interactions with Non-Thai Teachers	1.59%	1.13%	2.62%	4.64%	43.59%	46.43%

3.1 Procedural context

The analysis of the recurrent patterns of the Thai leaners' interactional contributions in the procedural context showed that 4.94% and 2.76% of the contributions to the class interactions with the Thai teacher being words and simple sentences respectively, while 1.59% and 1.13% in the class with the British teacher. It was interesting to note that the learners constructed simple turns in English such as *OK, yes*, and *no* in response to the Thai teacher's turns in Thai, as illustrated in excerpt (7). Similarly, when asked before doing the class activity by the British teacher in English as in excerpt (8), their response was only simple English such as *yes* without seeking clarifications about the task procedures.

(7) Thai learners' interactions with Thai teacher

[6:44-7:58]

1. T: อาจารย์จะถามอีกครั้ง ครั้งนี้ไม่ต้องบอกว่าอยู่ในส่วนไหน แต่ให้ตอบคำถามเลย ((tr.: I will

2. ask you again. This time you don't identify it, just answer my question))
3. OK? ((T asks all LL))
4. LL: OK.
5. T: เราตอบนอกเหนือจากที่สอนได้ไหม ((tr.: Can you answer beyond I have taught?))
6. LL: Yes.
7. T: แต่ต้องมีความสอดคล้อง เช่น อาจารย์บอกว่า See you on Monday. และเราเข้าใจผิดว่า
8. See you on Tuesday. จะได้เจอกันไหม ((tr.: But it should match with the
9. question. For example, see you on Monday. And if you misunderstand that see
10. you on Tuesday. Could we meet up?))
11. LL: No
12. T: เหตุผลที่อาจารย์ถามเพื่อให้เราได้เข้าใจมากกว่านี้ ((tr.: The reason that I ask you
13. because I want you to get more understanding)) OK, number twenty.

(8) Thai learners' interactions with non-Thai teacher

[0:01-0:25]

1. T: First thing I will let you play the game, are you ready?
2. LL: Yes.
3. T: OK. I go to market and I buy A for apple.
4. What can you buy for B? ((T shows an action))
5. LL: Banana.
6. T: Great. Banana. What can you buy for C?

Apparently, the learners were cognizant of the need to speak English in the English class and felt secure to respond in L2 when the teachers' questions, whether in Thai or English, required only short answers. To improve the learners' contributions in this type of micro-context, the teacher may need to convey procedural information to the learners in English and ask more questions which check their understanding of the task procedures.

3.2 Form-and-accuracy context

In the form-and-accuracy context, the learners' contributions to class interaction with both teachers were also in simple English words and sentences with 2.47% and 2.18% respectively of the interactions with the Thai teacher, 2.62% and 4.64% with the British teacher. As seen in excerpts (9) and (10), the turns constructed in this context were often

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subject to repair by the teachers. In (9), for instance, *sea* was treated as being an appropriate word used in the learner's question and repaired by the Thai teacher, while the word *queen* in (10) does not grammatically fit in the sentence launched by the teacher. The learners' contributions in both classes were still in the form of short phrases with occasionally inappropriate use of words.

(9) Thai learners' interactions with Thai teacher

[39:35-39:46]

1. L: When do you want to go to the sea?
2. T: When do you want to go to the beach is better. Yes, next week.

(10) Thai learners' interactions with non-Thai teacher

[4:05-4:26]

1. T: Q?
2. L: Queen.
3. LL: ((laugh))
4. T: Queen is correct but you should say queen apple, that's the apple. ((Queen is
5. inappropriate in response to the sentence "*I go to market and I buy…"))* R?
6. L: Labbit.
7. T: It's wrong pronunciation, you should say rabbit.
8. LL: Rabbit.

While the learners' ability to use the target language was apparently limited, the teachers may need to formulate more challenging questions, especially ones that require longer answers to improve their interaction in the context.

3.3 Meaning-and-fluency context

In the meaning-and-fluency context, as shown in table 2, the learners contributed much more to the class interactions with the non-Thai teacher, with words and simple sentences respectively being 22.84% and 64.81% of the interactions with the Thai teacher, while 43.59% and 46.43% with the non-Thai teacher. The two teachers allowed the learners to practice asking questions, reversing roles by giving them the opportunities to practice being the first pair-part speaker. With the Thai teacher, the learners often repeat the teacher's question in the previous turn; on the other hand, using different *wh*-word prompts, the British teacher allowed the learners to practice making a variety of questions as in (12).

(11) Thai learners' interactions with Thai teacher

[36:05-36:53]

1. T: OK. Ask me a question.
2. L10: How about at your home?
3. T: How about at my home? Yes, if you don't mind.
4. Chai. What date is your holiday?
5. L11: Sunday morning.
6. T: Sunday morning. Ask me a question.
7. L11: How about at my room?
8. LL: ((laugh))
9. T: I'm sorry. I'm married.
10. LL: ((laugh))

(12) Thai learners' interactions with non-Thai teacher

[19:23-21:20]

1. T: OK, anybody asks me questions.
2. L: What is your favourite band?
3. T: My favourite band is Bodyslam.
4. OK, when?
5. When is your
6. L: birthday?
7. T: Birthday, 20th of June 19 bla bla bla. Where?
8. L: Where do you stay?
9. T: I stay near the park.
10. Very good question.
11. Why?
12. L: Why do you stay here?
13. LL: ((laugh))
14. T: Because I can take my dog for walking. Very good question. OK, you get the
15. idea.

While both teachers tried to get the learners to make questions, the English teacher was however able to elicit a greater variety of questions from the learners. In classes with Thai teachers, learners should therefore be encouraged to ask questions in English and formulate more complex interactive responses.

Conclusion

This study closely examined Thai learners' interactions with Thai and non-Thai teachers in different micro-pedagogical contexts of English conversation classes to see how the capacity of human resources available can be maximized to enhance learners' learning experiences. The analysis results showed that micro pedagogical contexts, i.e., procedural, form-and-accuracy, and meaning-and-fluency, as delineated in Seedhouse (2004) were constructed in the classes with Thai and non-Thai teachers. However, the teachers and learners varied their interactional contributions in the different micro contexts. The Thai teacher spent significantly more time on explaining the task procedures to the learners before doing the class activities. The non-Thai teacher, on the other hand, allowed the learners to interact more in the form-and-accuracy and meaning-and-fluency contexts. The learner's mispronunciation of words was also repaired by the teacher. Apparently, corrective feedback was found less often in the class with the Thai teacher.

Regarding contributions to classroom interaction, the Thai learners were apparently comfortable only with producing short, simple turns in the target language in response to their teacher, regardless of the main language the latter used to elicit them. This indicates that the learners' ability to use the target language was apparently limited, and they still needed to develop ability to construct a more complicated turn unit in English. In order to improve the learners' interactional contributions in every context constructed, the teacher may need to ask more questions which check their understanding of the task procedures, and to improve the learners' interaction in each context, more challenging questions should be asked requiring the learners to supply more than just simple yes/no answers but to formulate more longer and complex turns.

The findings of the study carry important implications for the employment of Thai and non-Thai teachers in teaching English conversation courses and for the development of pedagogical intervention plans to enhance the efficacy of the teaching methods adopted by both groups of teachers to improve English language learners' oral communication skills. While one group of teachers may have the edge over the other in such aspects as noticing problems and giving feedback, there is still room for both groups to enhance their learners' interactions through more challenging question prompts. Furthermore, whether learning with native or non-native teachers, Thai learners still need to master use of words and basic grammatical structures in oral communication. Maximal interaction in the target language should be given a priority by teachers especially in form-and-accuracy and meaning-and-fluency contexts.

However, this study was conducted on a small group of participants at a commercial technological college in southern Thailand. Further research should therefore explore other groups of learners and larger groups of Thai and non-Thai teachers in order to arrive at any valid generalization about interaction between learners and teachers from both groups. Moreover, the questionnaire should be also provided for the learners in order to elicit their attitudes toward learning English with each type of teacher and ways to enhance their learning experiences.

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