



Interlocutor and Familiarity Effects on L2 Learners' Use of Lexical LREs During Task-Based Interaction

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Numerous studies have examined the language-learning opportunities that arise when the design of tasks is such that successful resolution requires speakers to negotiate for meaning (e.g., Long, 2015). However, interlocutors often influence these learning opportunities. The present study examines the relationships between interlocutors (learner–NS or learner–learner dyads) and interlocutor familiarity in relation to the frequency of lexical language-related episodes (LREs). The data for the study, from the Giessen Long Beach Chaplin Corpus (GLBCC; Smith, Jucker, & Müller, 2001), included 71 transcribed interactions between native and non-native university-level English speakers with varying degrees of familiarity. Results indicated that the number of LREs between familiar and unfamiliar interlocutors was similar in all conditions. These findings indicate that there may be little influence of interlocutor—learner or NS, familiar or unfamiliar—on the frequency of LREs, which suggests that learners negotiate meaning in similar ways regardless of whom they interact with.

Keywords: Language Related Episodes, interaction, interlocutor- familiarity, native speaker status

Introduction

Learners are often put in situations where they have to interact with native speakers or non-native speakers. Conversational interactions in a second language (L2) are based on meaning negotiation, which can occur when two interlocutors seek mutual understanding in their conversations. However, studies have shown that L2 learners' conversations can differ in various ways depending on the interlocutor (e.g., Plough & Gass, 1993).

Accordingly, a large body of literature has focused on different patterns of interaction that are due to interlocutor traits (Gass & Varonis, 1985b; Long, 1983, 2007; Mackey, 2012; Mackey, Oliver, & Leeman, 2003; Philp, 2003; Rashidi & Rafieerad, 2010; Wang, 2011). Studies have addressed interaction differences caused by interpersonal familiarity and interlocutor proficiency. Their findings vary, but most previous studies claim that L2 learners show different interaction patterns depending on whom they are talking to or that different kinds of interlocutors can provide different kinds of help to L2 learners.

As an interlocutor trait, familiarity has been much less studied than native speaker status. The few studies that have examined this condition (e.g., Cao & Philp, 2006; Gass & Varonis, 1984) have found that learners are more confident, have more willingness to communicate, and better comprehend each

other when they interact with familiar peers. These findings suggest that learners may co-construct interactions differently according to whether they are paired with a familiar or unfamiliar interlocutor. To further explore this possibility, more research analyzing learners' interaction patterns is needed.

One suitable way to explore L2 learners' interaction patterns is to examine their language-related episodes (LREs). L2 learners can raise their awareness of their own language use, particularly their grammar or lexical choices, by talking about it. For example, when engaging in communicative tasks, L2 learners may encounter difficulties in finding the appropriate words for a given context. As learners become aware of the gaps in their interlanguage, they seek help from their interlocutor. By doing so, learners are able to negotiate and find the appropriate lexical items (Fernández Dobao, 2012, 2014; Oliver, 1995; Swain, 1995). Given the potential benefits of focusing on language use in communicative interaction, L2 learners' LREs are crucial to investigate.

While considerable attention has been given to the relationship between NS status and the frequency of LREs, interlocutor familiarity has remained noticeably understudied. Accordingly, the present study expands on previous research by looking at the relationship between the frequency of occurrences of lexical LREs and interlocutor familiarity as well as the relationship between the frequency of lexical LREs and interlocutor variable (i.e., NNS-NS, NNS-NNS, ESL or EFL interlocutors). The data analyzed in the current study are part of the Giessen Long Beach Chaplin Corpus (GLBCC; Smith et al., 2001), a large corpus that includes L2 learners' interactions in these particular conditions. Unlike the existing research, this study analyzed data elicited through tasks that closely resemble classroom situations and which were not directly designed to examine LREs. We believe that these data were ideal for this investigation, because tasks designed specifically for the purpose of eliciting LREs (e.g., collaborative writing task) are likely to elicit a higher frequency of LREs, thus overestimate learners' frequency of LRE production. In contrast, because it used data from interaction tasks, this study should be more relevant to real-life classroom situations. The study explored the hypothesis, which is based on the results of previous studies, that interpersonal familiarity and different kinds of interaction conditions can affect the negotiation of meaning seen in LREs.

Theoretical Background

Interaction and LREs

Long (1996) argued that interaction and negotiation for meaning facilitate acquisition because they link input modification, internal learner capacities, and output in productive ways. The increased comprehensibility that negotiation for meaning can bring is crucial in helping L2 learners to pay attention to the meaning of new forms and to possibly acquire the forms.

While examining meaning negotiation in the context of task performance, many researchers have also concentrated on LREs, which are parts of interactions in which learners talk about their language use (e.g., Kim, 2008; Kowal & Swain, 1994; Mackey & Gass, 2006; Swain, 1995). Swain and Lapkin (1995, 1998) defined LREs as any segment of protocol in which L2 learners monitor and question their language use and solve it successfully or unsuccessfully. Kowal and Swain (1994) classified LREs into meaning-based, grammatical, and orthographic episodes. Their findings confirmed that LREs can promote language learning by raising awareness of interlocutors' language gaps. Swain and Lapkin (2001) further distinguished LREs into lexis-based and form-based, and explained the relationship between LRE and L2 learners' language development. According to their classification, lexis-based LREs include searching for vocabulary items whereas form-based LREs involve an aspect of grammatical knowledge such as syntax.

The majority of LRE studies have focused specifically on lexical LREs, as they occur with more frequency in interactions among L2 learners (e.g., Philp, Walter, & Basturkmen, 2010), particularly when the learners are doing meaning-oriented tasks. Lexical LREs have been defined as all instances where learners talk about lexical items and their correct use (Fernández Dobao, 2012, 2014; Kim & McDonough,

2008; Leeser, 2004; Swain & Lapkin, 1998, 2001; Williams, 1999). They involve learners seeking and selecting among competing lexical items (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). In other words, during lexical LREs, learners have an opportunity to discuss the meaning of a word or try to choose the correct term in a given context. In addition, evidence exists that engaging in lexical LREs in their interactions with other learners or native speakers helps learners to retain the lexical items, thus possibly facilitating learning (Fernández Dobao, 2012; Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2005).

Because such interactions between learners are thought to prompt learning, several studies have also investigated whether different interlocutors might affect the frequency of LREs (e.g., Leeser, 2004; Storch, 2002; Watanabe & Swain, 2007). These studies have found that different interlocutor traits in dyadic interactions can influence the pattern of exchanges. In a more recent study, Fernández Dobao (2012) examined the occurrences of lexical LREs in learner–NS and learner–learner interactions. She classified LREs as successfully or unsuccessfully resolved and found that lexical LREs tended to be more frequent and more often successfully resolved in learner–NS interactions than in learner–learner interactions.

NNS versus NS interlocutors

A large body of literature (Gass & Varonis, 1984; Ke & Suzuki, 2011; Long, 1983; Mackey et al., 2003; Philp, 2003; Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, & Linnell, 1996; Polio & Gass, 1998; Varonis & Gass, 1985) has contributed to the research on interaction conditions by investigating factors such as the presence of NNS and NS interlocutors while L2 learners complete a given task. These researchers have attempted to explain whether L2 learners receive different amounts of feedback or linguistic help depending on whether they are interacting with NNS or NS interlocutors. This variable has been regarded as crucial as it may be a factor that affects L2 learners' language use and development. Moreover, in real-life classroom settings, particularly in the foreign language context, native speakers are not always available to interact with L2 learners and provide feedback. Therefore, it is important to examine whether interacting with NNS interlocutors can contribute to L2 learners' language development in similar ways as interacting with NS interlocutors.

Several studies have found that NNS–NNS interaction is beneficial to learners' language development, as they tend to negotiate meanings with other learners more often than with native speakers (Philp, Adams, & Iwashita, 2013; Porter, 1986; Varonis & Gass, 1985). These studies have argued that native speakers are not always able to be helpful in the negotiation of meaning; for example, when they do not share a cultural background with the learners or are not trained as language teachers. In addition, even though L2 learners do not always provide accurate corrective feedback with their peers, communicating with other learners is still meaningful for improving learners' L2 as they are exposed to language input. Moreover, compared to NS, L2 learners can be more approachable and give more opportunities for peer L2 learners to try out their interlanguage when providing feedback (Philp et al, 2013). In other words, L2 learners have been found to be as good or better resources for other L2 learners than native speaker interlocutors.

With respect to learner–learner interactions, studies have yielded mixed results in terms of the extent to which L2 learners' language proficiency can affect the frequency of LREs during task-based instruction (e.g., Kim & McDonough, 2008; Nakatsuhara, 2004, 2006). On the one hand, Leeser (2004) found an effect of interlocutor proficiency on the number of LREs. Higher proficiency learners' dyads tended to produce more LREs than lower proficiency learners' dyads. Similarly, in Williams's (1999, 2001) study comparing types of LREs (i.e., lexical or morphosyntactic) in the interactions of eight ESL learners of different language proficiencies, the higher proficiency learners tended to produce more LREs than the lower proficiency learners. In an assessment context, Nakatsuhara (2004), who investigated the effects of different-proficiency pairings in a speaking test, indicated that pairing learners of different proficiencies did not seem to affect their interactions substantially. Therefore, pairs of different-proficiency L2 learners may engage in LREs at similar frequencies and of similar types as pairs of same-proficiency learners.

Other studies (e.g., Fernández Dobao, 2012; Mackey et al., 2003; Oliver, 1995; Sato & Lyster, 2007), nevertheless, have reported results indicating that NS interlocutors can indeed play an important role in

providing appropriate feedback. In Oliver's (1995) study, child native speakers provided implicit negative feedback (i.e., recasts) to their non-native speaker interlocutors, leading the author to assert the crucial role of NS interlocutors in providing negative feedback to learners. Along the same lines, Mackey, Oliver, and Leeman (2003) suggested that NS interlocutors provided more feedback than NNS interlocutors. Therefore, these studies suggest, learner–learner and learner–NS interactions can differ in terms of meaning negotiation and types of feedback.

As this discussion of the previous research implies, there appears to be no consensus on the effect of interlocutor NS status on the frequency of LREs. It is clear, however, that more instances of LREs, particularly those that prompt negotiation, may lead to learning. There is therefore a need for further research to better understand some of the variables that might affect LREs' occurrences, and particularly for research using data relevant to real-life classroom situations.

Familiarity

Interlocutor familiarity has been regarded as another factor that might influence language learning. Several studies have suggested a connection between this factor and learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) which means the intention to start communicative behavior (Cao, 2011; MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998; McCroskey & Richmond, 1991). In Kang's (2005) study, for example, learners exhibited a greater degree of insecurity and anxiety when talking to unfamiliar interlocutors. Likewise, Cao and Philp (2006) found that learners' WTC was affected by the degree of familiarity with their interlocutors. Learners asserted that they felt more comfortable communicating with familiar classmates than unfamiliar ones.

Interlocutor familiarity has also been examined in the contexts of pair and group oral assessment in studies that have yielded contradictory results. On the one hand, some studies have found that test-takers tend to score higher when paired with familiar interlocutors (Katona, 1998; O'Sullivan, 2002). For example, Katona (1998) found that the interlocutor's familiarity to the test candidate seemed to influence the frequency of meaning negotiation in oral testing. On the other hand, Ockey, Koyama, and Setoguchi (2013) reported that scores remained constant whether test-takers were placed in familiar or unfamiliar groups.

Other studies have explained interlocutor familiarity in terms of language exchange. Gass and Varonis (1984), for instance, explored the effect of familiarity on native speakers' understanding of non-native speakers' speech. Their findings indicated that a native speaker's familiarity with a particular non-native speaker can facilitate understanding. In other words, native speakers who are used to a particular individual's nonnative accent can better understand that particular interlocutor better than they can understand unfamiliar NNS interlocutors. In another study, Bishop, Hartley, and Weir (1994) compared language-impaired children and normal children when they were talking with familiar and unfamiliar adults in interview settings. The study found no significant effect of the familiarity of adults on the normal children's number of utterances, mean length of utterances, or percent of initiations.

More relevant to the present study, interlocutor familiarity has also been linked to the way feedback is provided. Mackey (2012) proposed that familiarity between interlocutors might have an influence on how learners provide feedback and indicate non-understanding. On this topic, Plough and Gass (1993) examined the interaction between 10 NNS speaker dyads in two different conditions: one with a familiar partner and one with an unfamiliar partner. Learners were asked to interact with their partners in a spot-the-difference task, as well as a consensus type task. The results indicated that the interactions between learners were different according to the familiarity of the interlocutors. Unfamiliar pairs showed fewer instances of non-understanding and more continuers than familiar pairs. Because instances of non-understanding trigger negotiation of meaning and thus acquisition, the researchers suggested that familiarity could be another variable affecting acquisition.

In light of the contradictory results of previous research in regard to the effects of native speaker status on learners' engagement in LREs, as well as the lack of research on the influences of interlocutor

familiarity and language experience (i.e., ESL or EFL), the present study examined all of these factors together, using a similar framework to that employed by Fernández Dobao (2012). The study addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent can familiarity between learners of different pairings (e.g., learner–NS, learner–learner) affect the frequency of LREs in a conversation?
2. To what extent do interaction pairings (i.e., learner–learner and learner–NS) influence the frequency of LREs in a conversation?

Method

Corpus Data

The data used for the purposes of this study were retrieved from the Giessen Long Beach Chaplin Corpus (GLBCC; Jucker, Müller, & Smith, 2005; Smith et al., 2001). The corpus data were distributed by the University of Oxford under a creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. This corpus was composed of approximately 6.5 hours of transcribed interactions between native English speakers, ESL speakers who were living in the U.S., and EFL speakers¹, all the participants from university-level. More specifically, the corpus contained data from 19 native speaker dyads (NS–NS), 11 non-native speaker and native speaker dyads (NNS–NS), and 60 non-native speaker dyads (NNS–NNS), of which 32 pairs were German, and 28 were from a wide range of L1 backgrounds. The corpus also included demographic data such as L1 backgrounds, L2 language experience, and familiarity. A questionnaire, which participants filled out after they had performed the tasks, was used to elicit more information about the participants. This questionnaire asked participants to self-report whether their interlocutors were friends or strangers.

The experiments were conducted in laboratory settings. The pairs of university students were asked to engage in a conversation about a silent Charlie Chaplin movie, *The Immigrant*. They were first asked to watch either the first half or the second half of the movie. Next, one participant retold the first half of the movie, and then the other participant described the last half of the movie to his or her partner. Finally, they were given some written prompts for discussion (e.g., What did you think was the funniest part?), and the two participants were recorded as they talked about several aspects of the movie, including differences between the first half and the rest of the movie and their overall opinions of silent movies.

Procedure and Data Analysis

The present study analyzed data from the 71 dyads in the GLBCC that included NNSs (i.e., NNS–NS and NNS–NNS interactions). The analysis focused on the second part of the interactions, in which the participants engaged in conversation following discussion prompts. The first part of the interactions was disregarded because it was designed to elicit descriptions and narrations of the story, and thus included very few instances of information exchange.

In order to address both research questions, the data were coded following a procedure similar to that used by Fernández Dobao (2012). In other words, coding was done following a two-step process: (1) identifying lexical LREs throughout the data and (2), classifying these lexical LREs into three categories: LRE initiation, successfully resolved LRE, or unsuccessfully resolved LRE. Each category was defined by incorporating various features of interactions explored in previous studies, such as those by Plough and Gass (1993) and Brooks (2009). As presented in Table 1, LRE initiation was characterized by the

¹ EFL learners were further classified into high EFL and low EFL depending on whether they had lived in an English-speaking country from one to three years or for less than four weeks, respectively.

occurrence of problematic utterances, word suggestions, confirmation checks, or help or clarification requests. Successful resolution of LRE was defined by the occurrence of incorporated output, use of suggested words, finishing sentences, expansion of associated lexical items, and affirmation. In contrast, unsuccessful LRE features included ignoring the LRE initiation, switching topics, laughter, use of incorrect words, and silence or long pauses. LREs in the corpus data for this study were identified by both researchers. Following previous interaction studies (McDonough & Mackey, 2006; Oliver, 1995; Watanabe & Swain, 2008), the first researcher coded all the data, and the second researcher coded 25% of the data separately to check for inter-coder reliability. The resulting percentage of agreement was 91%, which indicated high inter-coder reliability. All disagreements were discussed to reach a consensus.

TABLE 1
Classification of LREs

Categories	Features of Interaction	Example
LRE initiation	Problematic utterances, suggesting words, asking for help, confirmation check, and clarification request	A: how do you call .. like er--...(2.0) on the ship, not inside.
Successful LRE	Incorporated output, use of suggested word, finishing sentences, expansion of associated lexical items, and affirmation	B: yeah on the d- ... deck. A: mhm-- yeah on the deck.
Unsuccessful LRE	Ignoring LRE initiation, switching topics, laughter, use of incorrect word, and silence or long pause	B: what's called it in English? I don't know exactly, it's the the remainder of ... this money. A: yeah... yeah

Due to the small sample size as well as the limited number of lexical LREs present in the data, the analysis mainly used non-parametric tests. We first examined the results through descriptive statistics and then conducted chi-square tests to compare the frequency of lexical LREs present in learner–NS and learner–learner interactions, as well as the interactions between familiar and unfamiliar interlocutors.

Results

RQ1. To What Extent Can Familiarity between Learners of Different Pairings Affect the Frequency of LREs in a Conversation?

In order to examine familiarity as an independent variable in meaning negotiation, the dyads were grouped into two categories: familiar and unfamiliar. As presented in Table 2 and Figure 1, slightly more LRE initiations occurred in unfamiliar dyads than in familiar dyads. However, when running an independent t-test to compare the number of LRE initiations, successful LREs, and unsuccessful LREs in the two types of dyads, no statistically significant differences were found between both types of dyads ($t(69, N = 71) = -.411, p = .682$). In other words, the familiar and unfamiliar dyads produced similar numbers of LRE initiations. Furthermore, familiarity did not seem to affect the occurrences of successful LREs ($t(69, N = 71) = -.519, p = .519$), and unsuccessful LREs ($t(69, N = 71) = .399, p = .691$). Participants who had self-reported being friends resolved lexical LREs to a similar extent to those who had reported being strangers.

TABLE 2
Comparison of LREs in Familiar and Unfamiliar Dyads

	Familiar dyads ($N = 47$)				Unfamiliar dyads ($N = 24$)			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
LRE initiation	1.31	1.74	0	7	1.5	1.76	0	7
Successful LRE	0.91	1.62	0	7	1.16	1.37	0	5
Unsuccessful LRE	0.4	.61	0	2	0.33	0.86	0	4

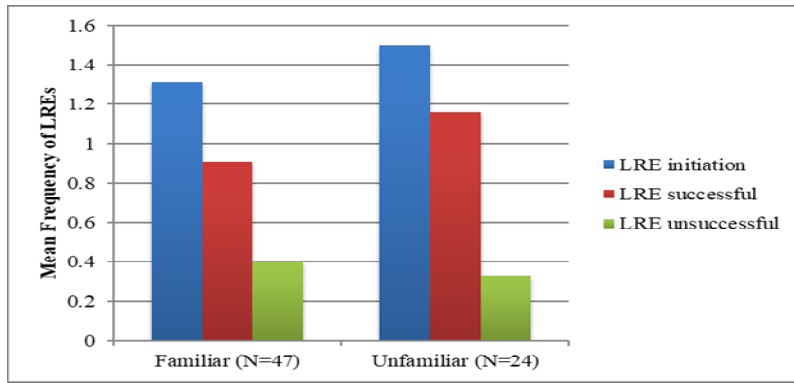


Figure 1. Comparison of LREs in familiar and unfamiliar dyads.

When familiarity was explored in learner–NS and learner–learner interactions separately (see Table 3 and Figure 2), no statistically significant difference was found between the interlocutor conditions ($\chi^2(6, N = 196) = 2.45, p = .874$). The familiar learner–NS dyads showed a higher frequency of LRE initiation and successful LREs than did the familiar learner–learner dyads. Nevertheless, chi-square tests indicated no statistically significant difference ($\chi^2(2, N = 124) = 1.446, p = .488$). In the unfamiliar dyads, both learner–NS interaction and learner–learner interaction also showed minimal differences. To be specific, chi-square statistics did not yield statistically significant differences in the production of any of the three types of LRE (LRE initiation, successful LRE, and unsuccessful LRE) between the two groups, learner–NS and learner–learner ($\chi^2(2, N = 72) = .129, p = .938$).

TABLE 3

Comparison of LREs in Familiar and Unfamiliar Dyads across Learner–NS and Learner–Learner Interactions

	Learner–NS				Learner–learner			
	Familiar (N = 7)		Unfamiliar (N = 4)		Familiar (N = 40)		Unfamiliar (N = 20)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
LRE initiation	2.28	2.81	1.5	1.91	1.15	1.47	1.5	1.79
Successful LRE	1.85	2.73	1.25	1.5	.75	1.33	1.15	1.38
Unsuccessful LRE	.42	.53	.25	.50	.4	.63	.35	.93

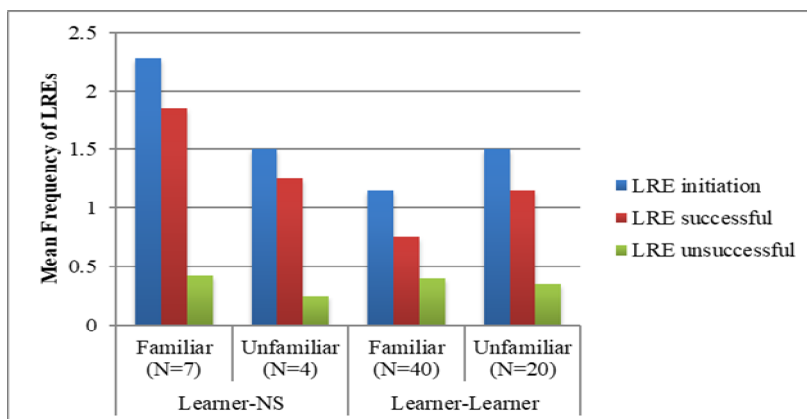


Figure 2. Comparison of LREs in familiar and unfamiliar dyads across learner–NS and learner–learner interactions

RQ2. To What Extent Do Interaction Pairings Influence the Frequency of LREs in a Conversation?

The frequency of lexical LREs was also compared between pairings with different language experiences and language proficiency. As can be observed in Table 4 and Figure 3, the number of successful and unsuccessful lexical LREs in learner–NS dyads varied according to the learners’ proficiency level. While dyads consisting of ESL students and native speakers tended to use all three different language strategies such as suggesting words to initiate LREs in their interactions, the dyads of NS–High EFL and NS–Low EFL speakers only used one or two of these strategies in their interactions. In addition, comparing the average number of LRE initiations, the low EFL group showed more instances of initiation than the other groups. Nevertheless, this group also presented more unsuccessfully resolved LREs than the other groups. In contrast, the ESL learners produced very few unsuccessfully resolved LREs. Nevertheless, chi-square test revealed no statistically significant differences in the frequency of LRE initiation, successful LRE, and unsuccessful LRE between the three groups ($\chi^2(4, N = 44) = 4.858, p = .302$).

TABLE 4
Native Speaker and Learner Interaction

	NS–ESL (N = 5)				NS–H EFL (N = 3)				NS–L EFL (N = 3)			
	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max
LRE Initiation	1	1.41	0	3	0.33	0.57	0	1	5.33	2.08	4	7
LRE Successful	0.8	1.09	0	2	0	0	0	0	4.66	2.08	3	7
LRE Unsuccessful	0.2	0.44	0	1	0.33	0.57	0	1	0.66	0.57	0	1

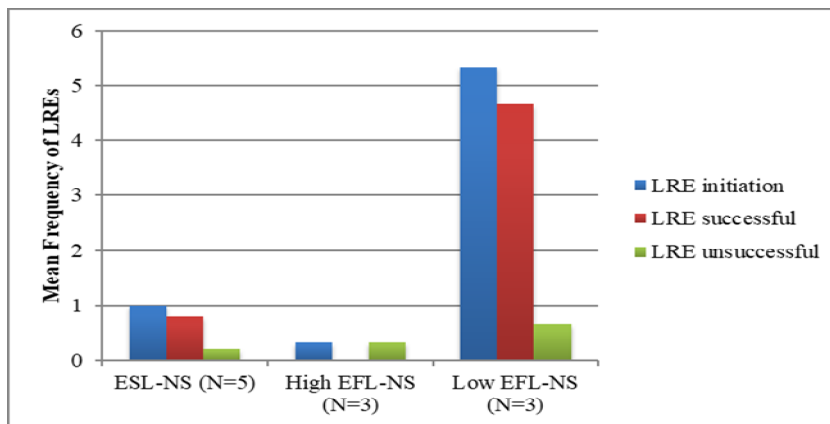


Figure 3. Native speaker and learner interaction.

A tally of the LREs in the different learner groups (see Table 5 and Figure 4) revealed that even though learners interacted with different interlocutors, and thus their language experiences varied, no notable differences were found in the frequency of LREs between the five groups ($\chi^2(8, N = 152) = 1.535, p = .992$). The dyads composed by high EFL (H EFL) and low EFL (L EFL) learners initiated slightly more LREs than the other types of dyads. Additionally, all interactions with EFL learners presented more LRE initiations than the interactions of the ESL learners (i.e., ESL–ESL). However, the differences were minimal and not statistically significant.

TABLE 5
Learner and Learner Interaction

Type of Interaction	LRE Initiation				LRE Successful				LRE Unsuccessful			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
ESL-ESL (N=11)	0.63	0.5	0	1	0.54	0.52	0	1	0.91	0.30	0	1
H EFL-HEFL (N=17)	1.41	2.12	0	7	0.94	1.63	0	6	0.47	1	0	4
H EFL-L EFL (N=15)	1.46	1.45	0	5	0.93	1.43	0	5	0.53	0.74	0	2
L EFL-L EFL (N=15)	1.35	1.59	0	5	1	1.41	0	5	0.35	0.63	0	2
ESL-H EFL (N=3)	1.33	1.52	0	3	1	1.73	0	3	0.33	0.57	0	1

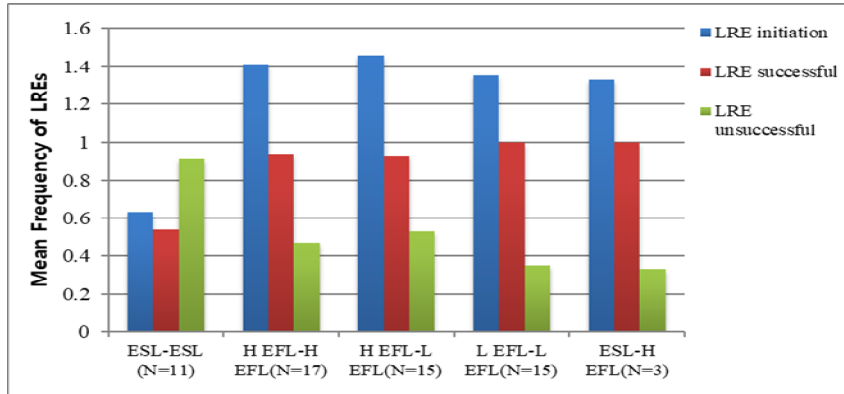


Figure 4. Learner and learner interaction.

Comparisons of the frequency of LREs in learner-NS and learner-learner interactions yielded similar results (see Table 6 and Figure 5). While it appeared that learner-NS interactions presented more LRE initiations and successfully resolved LREs than learner-learner interactions, no statistically significant results were found ($\chi^2(2, N = 196) = .536, p = .536$).

TABLE 6
Comparison of LREs in Learner-NS Interaction and Learner-Learner Interaction

	Learner-NS (N = 11)				Learner-Learner (N = 60)			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
LRE Initiation	2	2.44	0	7	1.26	1.58	0	7
Successful LRE	1.63	2.29	0	7	0.88	1.35	0	6
Unsuccessful LRE	0.36	0.50	0	1	0.38	0.73	0	4

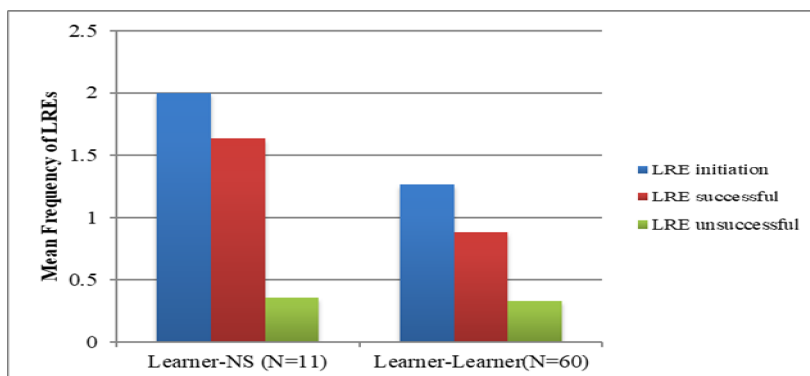


Figure 5. Comparison of LREs in learner-NS interaction and learner-learner interaction.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, it intended to determine the extent to which L2 learners' familiarity with their interlocutors could affect the number of LREs they produced in their interactions. Second, it aimed at finding out the extent to which the frequency of LREs in learner interactions is influenced by the interlocutors' language experience and proficiency, including whether they are native speakers or high or low ESL or EFL learners.

In the analyses of 71 interactions, 11 learner–NS and 60 learner–learner, the study first compared the numbers of lexical LREs across different degrees of familiarity. When the analysis combined learner–NS interactions with learner–learner interactions, the unfamiliar dyads seemed to initiate more LREs than the familiar dyads. Nevertheless, these differences were not statistically significant. These findings differ from those reported in the previous studies (Gass & Varonis, 1984; Katona, 1998; O'Sullivan, 2002), which claimed that familiarity with a particular non-native speaker could facilitate learners' understanding of each other's speech. They suggested that familiarity is an important factor contributing to interlocutors' varying behaviors, but that other factors, such as inherent characteristics of the interaction task, should also be taken into consideration. On the other hand, the findings of this study seem to be similar to those of some previous studies (Bishop et al., 1994; Ockey et al., 2013) in that there was no significant influence of familiarity on the numbers of LREs produced.

This study also examined familiarity separately for learner–NS and learner–learner interactions, and found that familiar learner–NS pairs presented a similar amount of LRE initiations than unfamiliar learner–NS pairs. In other words, familiarity did not affect the amount of non-understanding shown by the dyads. Nevertheless, even though there was no statistical difference, the unfamiliar dyads produced more LRE initiations and successful LREs. This finding contrasts with the results of Plough and Gass's (1993) study, in which the familiar learner pairs produced more clarification requests and confirmation checks. Although the frequency of LREs is not necessarily indicative of learning, and more LREs may not lead to more learning, the results of the present study might indicate that familiar and unfamiliar interlocutors can offer nearly equal amounts of help to learners in integrating lexical items into their L2 system.

In addition, this study examined the possible effects that interlocutors' language learning experiences might have on the number of lexical LREs produced during interaction. Thus, the numbers of lexical LREs produced were compared across dyads composed by interlocutors with different types of language learning experience. Again, no significant differences were found. ESL, high EFL, and low EFL learners employed similar numbers of LREs in their interactions with either native speaker or non-native speaker interlocutors. These findings differ from those of previous studies (Kim & McDonough, 2008; Leeser, 2004; Williams, 1999, 2001), where differences in proficiency were found to affect the number of LREs that occurred in learner interactions. Contrary to Williams (1999, 2001), who suggested that higher proficiency L2 learners tended to show a higher frequency of LREs, the findings of the current study did not show differences according to language experience. The differences in the results might be due to inherent differences in the type of tasks used in these studies, which might also have affected the type of language elicited (Ellis, 2000; Long, 1983; Pica, 1987). Language proficiency measures could have also been another possible factor that might challenge the comparability of results. The findings of this study, however, agree with the results found by Nakatsuhara (2004, 2006). She argued that proficiency differences have no effects on the conversational styles of learner interactions. Irrespective of L2 learners' language experience, the number of LREs they produce appears to be similar.

In addition, unlike Fernández Dobao's (2012) and Varonis and Gass's (1985) results, this study found no significant differences when comparing the frequency of occurrences of LREs between the interactions of learner–NS and learner–learner dyads. In other words, whether learners interacted with a native speaker or with another learner did not affect the numbers of lexical LREs they produced. Even examining the subcategories of LREs (e.g., suggesting words or asking for help) that the two groups produced, no notable differences were found. This indicates that L2 learners can help other L2 learners to talk about and to focus on lexical items as much as native speakers can (Philp et al., 2013). These findings

differ from those of previous studies (Mackey et al., 2003; Oliver, 1995) that suggest that native speakers can better elicit meaning negotiation. This lack of similarities to previous studies might be due to the low number of LREs in the current study. If more instances of LREs were found, the interpretations will be different. This difference in the results of the present study and those of previous studies might also be explained again through the differences in the tasks, as well as the time allotted to the interactions. This study only analyzed 10 minutes of oral interaction, whereas in Fernández Dobao's study, the learners were given a collaborative writing task that lasted more than 20 minutes. Differences in the design of the tasks to elicit interaction could also have influenced the amount of LREs observed. While the GLBCC (Smith et al., 2001) was created to look at discourse markers, the collaborative writing activity used by Fernández Dobao (2012, 2014) was designed specifically for the purpose of exploring LREs. Even though the activities that Fernández Dobao's studies and our study adopted are both meaning-oriented tasks, the collaborative writing activity inherently elicits more LREs as it requires L2 learners to talk a lot about their vocabulary choices. Furthermore, the longer interactions may have given participants more opportunities for producing LREs. These issues indicate the importance of objectivity when designing tasks.

Conclusion

The current study focused on interaction conditions (i.e., NNS–NS and NNS–NNS) and familiarity as factors that may affect the frequency of LREs. Despite the unbalanced numbers of each group, the study revealed that NS interlocutors do not necessarily facilitate the occurrence of LREs. Being paired with NSs or with other learners did not significantly affect the number of successfully or unsuccessfully resolved LREs in the interactions.

With respect to familiarity, the combined results from learner–NS interactions and learner–learner interactions did not show differences between familiar and unfamiliar dyads in terms of numbers of lexical initiations, successful LREs, or unsuccessful LREs. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of familiar learner–NS and familiar learner–learner interactions suggested that familiar learner–NS pairs did not produce more LRE initiation than familiar learner–learner pairs. Moreover, there were no other significant differences between the two groups.

Limitations and Pedagogical Implications

The study's findings have important implications in that they imply that L2 learners can benefit equally from interacting with peers or native speakers as well as from interacting with familiar or unfamiliar interlocutors in dyadic interactions. It would appear that the crucial factor is whether or not L2 learners have interlocutors. Particularly in EFL settings, it can be difficult to find interlocutors for L2 learners; however, the current study substantiates that it does not truly matter whether L2 learners talk about their vocabulary to peers, native speakers, familiar interlocutors, or unfamiliar interlocutors. When designing pair work activities in classroom settings, EFL and ESL teachers may consider a minimal influence of interlocutor on dyadic interaction tasks. Thus, this study confirmed that peer interaction can be beneficial for L2 learners regardless of whom the interlocutor might be, as they are given opportunities to negotiate for meaning.

In addition to the unbalanced numbers in the compared groups, the present study had several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, since the data were taken from a corpus, there were several variables that could not be controlled. Language proficiency, for example, was one of the variables that was assumed, based on the years of instruction. No language proficiency tests that could reliably distinguish proficiency groups had been administered. Moreover, even though the study analyzed the production of 71 dyads, the number of participants per proficiency group was rather small. In addition,

the nature of the tasks used in the corpus might have not been conducive to eliciting LREs. Nevertheless, these types of tasks are widely used in classroom situations. Thus, we believe that the results of this study reflected authentic classroom situations. Using tasks that elicit more LREs could on the one hand shed light on the effects of different types of interlocutors but on the other, not represent real classroom activities.

For future studies, a repeated measures design could be a better approach. As mentioned earlier, tasks that are longer than 10 minutes might yield different results. If the low number of LREs was the result of the small amount of time allotted to the task, then longer interactions might yield more robust results. A future study that includes more participants could also explore familiarity in more detail. Familiarity between non-native speakers could be an important factor that influences how much learners are able to benefit from conversational interaction (Gass & Varonis, 1985a). In addition, stimulated recalls could provide more information in terms of the degree of intentionality of LREs.

In spite of its limitations, this study sheds light on the need for ESL/EFL researchers and teachers to better understand the LREs in which ESL/EFL learners engage, especially when they interact with different people. Furthermore, its implications are relevant to classroom situations as it used data from task-based interactions. The tasks were not specifically designed to examine occurrences of LREs, making these interactions more similar to real-life classroom interactions. In summary, the findings indicate that in task-based language learning contexts, learners can negotiate meaning in similar ways regardless of the type of interlocutor.

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