

## ABSTRACT

This research investigates how learners from different L1 backgrounds interact with each other in the target language (i.e. English) in a British EFL setting and how they perceive the relative usefulness or effectiveness of such interaction. Adopting qualitative, non-experimental research methods, I provide a descriptive account of learner performance of classroom interactive tasks and learner perception of classroom student-student (S-S) interaction, via the collection and analysis of data derived from in-class recordings and after-class interviews.

I first constructed a theoretical framework for interaction studies in SLA, drawing on aspects of input, interaction and output and, in particular, the concept known as *negotiation of meaning*, to describe and analyse learner performance of classroom interactive tasks. While it became increasingly evident that the input-interaction-output framework cannot account for the totality of how learners interact with each other within real classroom contexts, the way they perceive its relative usefulness or effectiveness indicated beyond all doubt that it is unlikely for one to fully understand *what they say* without knowing *who they are* in the first place.

This research thus represents a journey of discovery, the results of which suggest the following. First, L2 learners have experienced and are able to perform both *negotiation of meaning* and *negotiation of positions*, as they strive to resolve communication breakdowns and to establish and enhance rapport during the course of conversational interaction. Second, how they perceive the classroom practice of student-student (S-S) interaction is subject to the interrelation between the learner, the immediate classroom surroundings and the broader context of living and studying. A revised theoretical framework for interaction studies thus requires a more cooperative, complementary relationship between the well-established psycholinguistic research tradition and the newly-implemented sociocultural research paradigm, within which researchers are to pay equal attention to cognitive/linguistic and social/pragmatic factors.