Code-switching to Know a TL Equivalent of an L1 Word: Request-Provision-Acknowledgement (RPA) Sequence

Cambio de código para conocer el equivalente en la segunda lengua de una palabra en la primera lengua: La secuencia RPA (pregunta-provisión-reconocimiento)

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This article focuses on the learner's use of Code-switching to learn the TL (Target Language) equivalent of an L1 word. The interactional pattern that this situation creates defines the Request-Provision-Acknowledgement (RPA) sequence. The article explains each of the turns of the sequence under the combination of the Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis and the Speech Act Analysis. The RPA sequence emerges from the analysis of a set of observations of EFL learners at university level. The insights of this study suggest that this RPA sequence presents pedagogical implications in the dynamics of classroom interaction and the way language learners and teachers negotiate meaning in class.

Key words: Classroom interaction, code-switching, communicative strategies, RPA sequence

Este artículo se enfoca en el cambio de código que el estudiante de una lengua extranjera hace para preguntarle al profesor sobre la palabra equivalente en la segunda lengua de una palabra en la primera lengua. El patrón interactivo que esta situación genera define la secuencia RPA (pregunta-provisión-reconocimiento por sus siglas en inglés). Este artículo además explica cada uno de los turnos de habla de la secuencia. El estudio se hace bajo el análisis etno-metodológico de la conversación y el análisis de los actos de habla presentes. La secuencia RPA es el resultado de una serie de observaciones hechas a estudiantes de inglés a nivel universitario. Los resultados sugieren que la secuencia RPA presenta implicaciones pedagógicas en la dinámica de la interacción en el salón de clases y en la forma en que los estudiantes y los profesores de una lengua extranjera negocian el significado en clase.

Palabras clave: cambio de código, estrategias comunicativas, interacción en el salón de clases, secuencia RPA

Introduction

As English language teachers, we are always looking for techniques that enable our learners to communicate more effectively in the target language. For this purpose, we develop techniques to encourage our learners to use the target language in terms of communicative functions and purposes. These techniques go from simple descriptions of our learners' familiar topics to discussions, debates, presentations, tasks, and oral reports about contents in the language program of the institution we work for. Whichever the case, we do believe that these strategies provide our learners with opportunities to focus not only on the linguistic patterns of English but also on negotiating meaning by using and learning the target language.

One of the language skills we mostly associate with communicative functions and purposes is speaking. In the classroom techniques we develop for this specific skill, we try to situate our learners so that they can use the target language (TL) to carry out communicative purposes. However, at the same time, we are placing them in a situation in which they need to demonstrate how proficient they can be in using the TL.

Then, within these classroom activities, we have surely noticed that, when our learners are speaking in the TL, they can and undoubtedly will encounter that they do not know the TL equivalent of a word in their first language (L1). As the unknown lexical item in the TL is needed to go on with constructing their talk, we eventually notice that our learners refrain from talking for a while to request us for help in saying the L1 word in the TL. Our most common subsequent action is then to reply with the word they are looking for in the TL.

Even though this short interactive pattern seems to be unexceptional, it involves more than a request and a reply. It carries out the communicative function of negotiating meaning in speaking activities in the language classroom. Even more, as the learner's request is usually addressed to the teacher, this pattern also deals with interactive aspects between the student and the teacher in class.

The purpose of this article is then to illustrate the functional level of the learner's request for the TL equivalent of an L1 lexical item, the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent and the subsequent acknowledgement of it in the learner's next talk. In order to do this, it is essential to describe the moments the pattern emerges, how it is developed between the learner and the teacher, and what implications each of these turns of the pattern bring into the student-teacher interaction in class.

The Context

Twenty sessions of four pre-intermediate level classes were video- or audio- taped. The language learners of these classes are at university level majoring in different fields such as business management, accounting, social communication, and publicity. The classes are for

learning English. As the teacher, all the learners speak a common L1 (Spanish). The learners had a relatively equal TL proficiency level. The observations primarily focused on the learner's talk in classroom interaction and then on code switching for requesting TL equivalents as the product of that interaction taking place between a learner and the teacher. The observations for this work did not take into account the learners' use of code-switching for clarifying, emphasizing, or expressing messages in class. These functions of code-switching require long stretches of language, and the main focus of this work is on describing the interactional pattern that emerges when the learners ask the teacher for the TL equivalent of an L1 word.

The Analysis

The analysis of the interactional pattern in reference rests on an Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis (ECA) (Seedhouse, 2004b). Basically, there are two main reasons for applying this type of analysis in this research. Firstly, according to Seedhouse (2004a), ECA gives an answer regarding what the machinery is that enables interactants to achieve a type of organization and order in talk-in-interaction. Undoubtedly, the interactional pattern in reference emerges from the current context given by the talk-in-interaction; then, the pattern is organized by the teacher and the learner within that context.

Secondly, ECA looks to unveiling how interactants analyze and interpret each other's actions and develop a shared understanding of the progress of the interaction (Seedhouse, 2004a). If we want to know how the interactional pattern dealt with in this article is developed between the learner and the teacher in classroom interaction, we need to unveil how they understand each other's actions to develop the pattern within the interaction. In this order of ideas, ECA then helps identify what the functions of the utterances uttered by the speakers in the interactional pattern are, plus their forces and interpretations. This reasoning goes along with Schegloff (1988) when he states that there is an action in the next turn which triggers the realization of another action based on the interpretation of what was done in the previous turn.

Alternatively, the analysis of the interactional pattern to learn the TL equivalent of an L1 word is closely related to the communicative strategy of code-switching. In accordance with Fernández and Palacios (2007), code-switching is a communicative strategy due to the fact that it is a technique the language learner uses to convey meaning when, "in their attempt to communicate in the foreign language with a reduced interlanguage system, they find that the target language items or structures desired to convey their messages are not available" (p. 88). Previous studies on code-switching in language classrooms have stated that learners use it for three major purposes: (a) for clarifying and emphasizing a message (Stroud, 1998), (b) for expressing first language idioms (Adendorff, 1993), and (c) for asking about the TL equivalent of an L1 word (Ûstûnel & Seedhouse, 2005).

The RPA Sequence

When the language learners use code-switching for the third purpose, there seems to be a common pattern that is developed in class between the learner who requests the TL equivalent and the teacher who provides it. In the data collected for this study, the interactional pattern that emerges in class for this request is composed of five parts: First, the learner expresses his/her idea about a topic but in the TL. Second, while constructing his/her speaking, the learner encounters that s/he does not know how to say a word in the TL. This situation makes him/her refrain from talking -this situation is similar to a breakdown in the conversation (Schegloff, 2000). In the third part, the learner opts to ask the teacher for the TL equivalent of the unknown word. Here, the learner generally uses code-switching: S/he puts the word into his/her L1 and requests the TL equivalent of that L1 word. Fourth, the teacher provides the TL equivalent of the L1 word; and fifth, the learner acknowledges it by incorporating or not incorporating that TL word as s/he continues constructing his/her speech in the TL. The following excerpt exemplifies the pattern:

Excerpt 1. How do you say bajar de peso? (To lose weight)

01. Learner: *The main topic of the movie is about drugs. She wants act like the TV program in the movie. She starts to…to take pills for…eh…uh…how do you say* bajar de peso?

02. Teacher: *To lose weight.*

03. Learner: *To lose weight because…eh…she wants put a red dress that she used before.*

This excerpt shows how the pattern in reference is commonly developed in the observations between the language learners and the teachers in classroom interaction while the former ones are speaking in the TL. In general terms, this interactional pattern is developed in a sequence of three turns. The first turn contains the learner's current talk, the breakdown, and the learner's request for the TL equivalent of the L1 word used to make the concept understood. The second turn is the teacher's provision of that TL equivalent. And the third turn is the learner's acknowledgement of that provision. According to the main interactional function of each of these turns, I will call this three-turn interactional pattern the RPA sequence (Request-Provision- Acknowledgement).

As can be seen in the transcript, the learners' use of code-switching to learn the TL equivalent of an L1 word in classroom interaction carries out functional purposes in the interaction. The learners need the TL equivalent to solve their breakdown and to continue constructing their utterance in the TL. They also need it to help the teacher fully understand, in the TL, the content of their speech. These two needs are in accordance with the established convention of the class' use of the TL to express content. These two purposes in turn build the current interaction between the teacher and the learner who makes the request.

Therefore, if the learners' use of code-switching to learn the TL equivalent of an L1 word carries out functional purposes in interaction, it becomes necessary to study the parts of this particular pattern under the Speech Act Theory. According to Searle (1969), a speech act happens under certain contexts, conditions, and intentions. Going back to the RPA sequence, these three aspects are identified as follows: The context is the talk in language classes precisely when a learner is producing output in the TL when interacting with the teacher. The conditions are the reference of generally only one attempt in the learner's emission of the code-switching (what the equivalent is). This emission is accompanied by sufficient information to identify the attempt (the learner's request). Finally, the learner's request presents two sequential intentions: It is initially for receiving a reply to solve the breakdown in the flow of communication; and then, for maintaining the interaction moving in accordance with the implicit conventions of the task (talking in the TL).

Furthermore, Searle (1969) states that each speech act has meaning and an effect on the behavior of the hearer during a conversation since each interactant reacts to what has been addressed the previous turn. It is noticeable in excerpt 1 when the learner requests the teacher for the TL equivalent, a situation that generates a reaction in the teacher who immediately provides the TL equivalent. Finally, a speech act seems to be composed of a syntactical structure (Searle, 1979): The observed learners generally use code-switching for both the question and the L1 word that needs the TL equivalent or simply for the unknown word in L1 that can come attached to a question in the TL (this aspect will be treated below).

When code-switching to know a TL equivalent of an L1 word is seen through the speech act theory and analyzed within the steps of the Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis, this approach of analysis contributes to revealing two core aspects in second language teaching: How language learning takes place in interaction and what pedagogy is applied to achieve it.

On the one hand, the RPA sequence defined in this article helps in the negotiation of meaning in interaction: The code-switched lexical item plus its TL equivalent play a role in building meaning in interaction. Also, this sequence helps explain how talk is co-constructed (Schegloff, 1997) between the learner and the teacher in class: After the provision of the TL equivalent, the interaction flow resumes. Finally, this pattern deals with the interlanguage perspective (Tarone, 2001): the comparison of both languages, L1 and TL, for communication and learning.

On the other hand, the RPA sequence allows, to some extent, pupil-initiated interaction (Ilatov, Shamai, Hertz-Lazarovitz, & Mayer-Young, 1998), which puts into practice the pragmatical language competence: how the language learners take advantage of their turn for an extended talk to solve communication problems. Besides, the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent gives an account of the continuant understanding of the learners' meanings: The

TL equivalent generally fills in the blank left by the breakdown in accordance to morpho-syntactical forms (this will be described below). When this happens, the teacher is fully aware of interlanguage aspects since the TL equivalent is directly copied by the learner to go on constructing his/her speech. Therefore, I say that the TL equivalent provision is conversational-constructing since it provides input which serves the learners' needs of the current communication.

The RPA Sequence in Detail

As explained above, the RPA sequence is composed of three turns. The first turn, which is uttered by the learner, contains three parts: the learner's talk, the learner's breakdown, and the learner's request. The second turn is the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent, and the third turn is the learner's incorporation or decision not to incorporate that TL equivalent. This three-turn interactional pattern usually emerges in speak-out activities in language classroom such as presentations, debates, discussions, reporting exercises, and eliciting. The pattern is developed between the learner and the teacher when the former is talking and s/he requests of the latter the TL equivalent of a word expressed in the L1. This word is needed to continue constructing the learner's talk. Figure 1 shows these parts in the conversation of excerpt 1:

Turn		
01. Leaner	The main topic of the movie is about drugs. She wants act like the TV program in the movie. She starts to…to take pills for	Learner's talk
	…eh…uh…	Breakdown
	how do you say *bajar de peso*?	Learner's request
02. Teacher	*To lose weight.*	Teacher's provision
03. Learner	*To lose weight* because…eh…she wants put a red dress that she used before.	Learner's incorporation

Figure 1. The five parts of the RPA sequence

In the learner's talk in turn 01, the learner is making his/her utterance using content related to the topic of the current speak-out exercise. Then s/he comes across an L1 word s/he does not know how to express in the target language. This situation causes a breakdown in his/her talk. In the classes observed, this breakdown is usually expressed in the forms of

"*eh…*", "*ah…*", silence, or the continuant repetition of the immediate previous word before the unknown L1 word (e.g. Learner: "it's different because the woman see *in the… in the… in the…* espejo? [tr: mirror?]").

Request. Just after the breakdown, the learner requests the TL equivalent of the L1 word s/he does not know how to express in the TL. The learner can request by asking a question with the formula "*How do you say…?*" followed by the word needed but expressed in the L1. S/He can also opt to ask the question in L1 (e.g. "*cómo digo…?* [tr: how do I say…?]") plus the word needed, expressed in the L1 equally. Or, the learner can simply say the word needed in the L1 with a rising intonation (e.g. Learner, "…with the information was damaged and eh… eh… *algunas cosas*? [some things?]").

A closer analysis of this request to find a reason the learners code switch gives as a result connection to interactional strategies to construct their talk. The learners observed adopt and use this interactional strategy of using their own L1 as a resource to help themselves solve the breakdown caused by ignorance of the TL lexical item that would express the concept needed. Additionally, in line with Hong Han (2002), the learners also use the L1 to request the concept because they are aware they share the same L1 with the teacher, so they know they can verbalize their utterances in L1 when a breakdown in the TL occurs. Whichever the case, the learner's use of his/her L1 does not cause any fracture in the current interaction just because the request becomes part of and is coherent with the current talk.

Provision. As soon as the learner has requested the TL equivalent, the teacher provides it. However, as simple as it may sound, this teacher's provision of the TL equivalent carries some important features. Initially, the prompted teacher's response to the learner's question shows affiliation (Seedhouse, 2004a), which is defined as the immediate response to a request in talk-in-interaction.

Secondly, the TL equivalent provided by the teacher generally fills in the blank of the breakdown in accordance with morpho-syntactical forms (verb tense/form, word choice, noun gender/number, preposition, pronoun, word order, and adjective/adverb clause). For instance, the TL equivalent of a verb is provided with its respective form and tense in accordance with the sentence having the breakdown (e.g. Learner, "free antivirus that the people is… is… eh… *bajan*? [tr: download?]" -Teacher, "download." Or, -learner, "the antivirus is good option is is no cost but eh… eh… eh… *incluye*? [tr: it includes?]" -Teacher, "includes."). In these two examples, the teacher provides the verb that should be used in the context of the talk, within its respective form and tense: present simple third person plural and singular, respectively. This second feature reveals that the teacher is permanently concerned with, in the learner's talk, both form and meaning at the same time.

In addition, the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent in the morpho- syntactical form needed by the learner brings to light the importance the teacher gives to exposing the learner with TL accuracy for communication. Therefore, there is an analysis by the teacher of the learner's meanings in the context of the current talk. The teacher's provision comes then from two sources: firstly, from his/her own understanding of the current talk-in-interaction in accordance with how the topic of the interaction has been developed by the learner; and secondly, from the teacher's awareness of the learner's immediate needs in communication.

As a third feature, the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent is more input for the learner, input that is contextualized and brings a communicative focus. Even though this provision of a lexical item in the TL is more input for the learner, the analysis of this three-turn interactional pattern in the classes observed unveils that this teacher's provision involves no negotiation of the TL equivalent provided. The learner just accepts it and rarely asks for the reason of that teacher's selection. Therefore, the provision is conversational-constructing but not didactic. It means that the TL equivalent provided by the teacher is for the learner to fill in the blank of the breakdown so that s/he can continue constructing his/her utterance. The TL equivalent is not used for teaching vocabulary or giving instruction on syntactical issues.

The reason there is no negotiation of the TL equivalent seems to happen because of two reasons: first, the learner apparently sees the teacher as an interlanguage expert who is able to understand the meaning of the learner's utterances in both languages (L1 and TL) at the same time. Second, the learner does not usually share the same TL background and proficiency of the teacher; then, for the learner, it is the teacher who must know the TL by far and must then be largely capable to provide the best TL equivalent that fills the blank left by the breakdown.

A final feature deals with keeping up the established classroom convention of using the TL in classroom communication. The teacher's action of providing the TL equivalent maintains the awareness of following this established convention. On the whole, and in agreement with Johnson (1995), the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent has a function of provider of information with the properties of strengthening the TL use, sustainment and error elimination, and regulating the use of the TL in classroom communication.

Acknowledgement. The third turn of the RPA sequence is the learner's acknowledgement of the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent. This acknowledgement is made by the learner by incorporating or not incorporating the TL equivalent in his/her talk in the third turn of the sequence.

As a first instance, the learner acknowledges the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent by incorporating it when the TL equivalent is first familiar to the learner; and then, it is used for resuming his/her talk since the moment the breakdown occurred. When it happens, the TL equivalent then links, with emphasis, what the learner was saying with what s/he needs to

go on saying to finish expressing the full meaning of what s/he was saying. The following excerpt exemplifies this type of learner's acknowledgement.

Excerpt 2. Algunas cosas *damage.*

01 Learner: *I save my computer, no, with the information was damage and eh…eh…*algunas cosas*?*

02 Teacher: *some things*

03 Learner: <u>*some things*</u> *yes, damage and…eh…my computer had different virus.*

Notice how the learner acknowledges the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent needed by incorporating it with pitch emphasis in turn 03. The affirmation "yes" reveals that the learner is already familiar with the TL word provided. This TL equivalent now joined with the word "damage" links what the learner was saying in turn 01 with what she needs to go on saying to complete her idea in turn 03. To highlight, when the learner incorporates the TL equivalent provided by the teacher, s/he incorporates exactly what the teacher says. They do it because they assume that what the teacher answers is undoubtedly the correct option to use.

As a second instance, the learner acknowledges the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent but s/he does not necessarily incorporate it. This can happen due to three communicative reasons:

1. It is not conversationally necessary for the learner to repeat the TL equivalent in his/her talk in the third turn since only the teacher's saying it links what the learner was saying with what s/he needs to go on saying to finish expressing the full meaning of what s/he was saying. The following excerpt exemplifies this communicative reasoning:

Excerpt 3. *The woman see in the mirror.*

01 Learner: *It's different because the woman see in the…in the…in the…*espejo*? (He points to the painting)*

02 Teacher: *mirror*

03 Learner: *(he nods) and the woman is…*<u>*there*</u>*. (He points to the painting)*

04 Teacher: *but that is <u>not</u> a mirror, <u>that</u> is a <u>window</u> and there are <u>two</u> people.*

In this excerpt, the learner is expressing his interpretation about a painting. For him, the two characters in the painting are the same but separated by a mirror. Though the learner acknowledges the teacher's TL equivalent by nodding in turn 03, he does not need to incorporate it into his subsequent turn because the concept has just been referenced via the interaction of the teacher's provision and via the learner's outpointing of it in the picture. Then, the learner seems to consider it unnecessary to refer to it again.

2. The learner does not incorporate the TL equivalent provided by the teacher because the learner does not seem to have fully identified the TL equivalent due to ignorance about it or its uncommonness in use/structure. Let us study the following excerpt:

Excerpt 4. *Ask for apologies,* eso.

01 Learner: *My experience is a friend of school. He give me romantic <u>things</u>. He is very (intense) and my boyfriend see my facebook and (   ) to see no normal thing and the man write me eh…eh…*pedir disculpas*?*

02 Teacher: *to ask for apologies*

03 Learner: *aha,* eso.*[tr: that's it.]*

Notice that in turn 03, the learner acknowledges the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent by saying "aha" although she does not fully identify it. When this is the case, the learner just acknowledges the teacher's provision by a marker (e.g. "yes" or "aha") and goes on with his/her talk if s/he needs to go on saying something else. This is the way the learner solves this conversational situation.

3. The third communicative reason for the learner not to incorporate the teacher's provision of the TL equivalent is due to the length of it. This happens when the teacher's provision is so long that the learner does not deal with repeating it all. The next excerpt exemplifies this reason:

Excerpt 5. *Format not, stop.*

01 Learner: *my computer had different (virus) and once for one USB, and the program is Ares, and I for…format the computer, <u>no</u>, ah…*cómo se dice *(she moves her hands in the air like describing a box)* el disco duro se dañó? [tr: the hard disk was corrupted?]*

02 Teacher: *ah… the virus was in the hard drive and it damaged the computer.*

03 Learner: *yes and ah…eh…it stop.*

After the learner requests the TL equivalent in turn 01, the teacher provides it in the next turn in such a long way that the learner does not deal with repeating it all in the third turn of the interaction. The learner just acknowledges the teacher's provision and then goes on with his talk.

A final aspect to highlight in the learner's acknowledgement turn: In the third turn of these four previous excerpts, the learner's affirmative verbal or non-verbal signal offers the teacher the acceptance of his/her previous provision of the TL equivalent and enough evidence of the learner's satisfactory understanding of the intended message.

Non preferred Organization in the RPA Sequence

The preferred organization of the RPA sequence is the learner's request for the TL equivalent of an L1 word, the teacher's provision of it, and the learner's acknowledgement of it. However, this preferred organization is broken when the teacher does not understand what precise concept the learner needs in the TL. Let us study the following excerpt from the data:

Excerpt 6. Menos*? [tr: less?]*

01 Learner: *Eh…the love in internet I consider it like isn't good because eh in the life eh I eh…I don't know the person eh…eh…how do you say* menos*?*

02 Teacher: menos*?*

03 Learner: no conozco a las personas <u>menos</u> las conozco…no, las conozco <u>menos</u> que en la vida real *[tr: I don't know people less I know them…no, I don't know them less than in real life.]*

04 Teacher: *ok. I don't know <u>this</u> nor the <u>other</u> (The teacher waves from right to left)*

05 Learner: *nor eh…nor…when I don't I don't look personally the people.*

Notice that in turn 01 the learner is talking when the breakdown occurs. Then she asks for the TL equivalent of the L1 word "menos." The teacher does not seem to understand the reason that that L1 word helps construct the idea the learner is developing since, under the teacher's syntactical judgment, the concept requested does not seem to give structure to the learner's talk. As a result of it, in turn 02, the teacher requests clarification (Long & Sato, 1983) of the concept needed. After the learner clarifies her request, the teacher provides the TL equivalent needed and the sequence is then completed with the learner's acknowledgement of it.

Pedagogical Implications and Conclusions

The RPA sequence is an interactional pattern that occurs in classroom interaction between the learner and the teacher. The sequence is composed of five parts that are placed and carried out in three turns. In the first turn, the learner is talking to express an idea of a classroom topic (part 1). When this is happening, the learner can encounter a concept that s/he does not know how to express in the TL. This situation causes a breakdown in his/her talk (part 2). To solve this event, the learner asks the teacher how to say the concept in the TL. The learner expresses the concept in his/her L1 (part 3). In the second turn, the teacher provides the TL equivalent (part 4). Finally, in the third turn, the learner acknowledges the provision and incorporates or does not incorporate the TL equivalent in his/her talk in this turn.

By taking into account this development, the RPA sequence is understood as an interactional pattern because it is co-constructed between the learner and the teacher for the

purpose of establishing mutual understanding initially of meaning and then of interactional movements. When the learner asks the teacher for the TL equivalent of an L1 word and then the teacher provides it, the purpose of both movements is to help the construction of meaning and the maintenance of the flow of the conversation.

As seen in the excerpts above, the functions that the utterances have in this three-turn sequence operate at the textual and functional level. At the textual level because the TL equivalent helps give linkage and cohesion to the learner's talk to continue expressing his/her ideas. At the functional level because each turn in the RPA sequence carries out interactive functions that help in the development of the interactional pattern between the learner and the teacher.

Therefore, the utterances in each of the three turns of the RPA sequence give an account of how preceding and projectable talk (Schegloff, 1988) happens in classroom interaction. The analysis of the function of each turn helps one see not only what these utterances can do in classroom interaction, but also what the interactants expect from them and are attentive to in them. Each turn of the RPA sequence has an effect on the other interactant's interactional behavior. In agreement with Searle (1969), this happens because "each interactant reacts to what has been addressed in the previous turn" (p. 56, 57).

This sequential implicativeness (Crane, 2004) in the three turns of this interactional pattern indicates that the language in the RPA sequence follows a linear sequence. In each turn, one line of text follows another, with each line being linked or related to the previous line. This linear progression of the sequence is what then creates the context in the interaction. As seen in the excerpts in this article, the utterances of the RPA sequence do not interrupt the communicative interaction and the negotiation of meaning. On the contrary, they keep the conversation moving as they create an understanding of how both interactants display conversational competences.

The learner's use of code-switching to know the TL equivalent of an L1 word makes reference to one concept in particular. The learner is referring to a specific concept that needs translation into the TL. This request emerges when the learner does not know how to express a concept in the TL while s/he is talking about an idea or viewpoint in speak-out exercises in class. In line with Searle (1969), it can then be said that this learner's request is referential. There is one major reason to explain this. The learner's request is referential because it happens in a particular situation to request for an exact concept in context, under certain circumstances and with a particular intention. The concept requested by the learner in his/her L1 is useful to, first, select and identify a particular meaning that is different from the other lexical items emitted by him/her in the TL during his/her current talk; and second, the concept requested and then provided by the teacher consequentially serves to continue constructing the learner's talk to finish expressing his/her idea. For this reason, the learner's

request is referential, because it points to a meaning and a function in particular in classroom interaction.

By taking into account the dynamics of classroom interaction, the three-turn sequence that the learner's request of the TL equivalent develops creates the interactional pattern described. Subsequently, this three-turn sequence is used as a model to solve a breakdown of the kind in the learner's talk. However, in order for this interactional pattern to take place, both the teacher and the learners must share the same interactive framework. This means that the RPA sequence resulting from the interactional pattern described contributes to the harmony of classroom interaction between the teacher and the learners.

As the transcripts in this article display, the learner's use of his/her L1 to ask for the TL equivalent is sidestepped (Wong, 2005) by the teacher, which means that the teacher lets the interaction go on without questioning the learner for the use of his/her L1 or for details concerning the TL equivalent. In other words, the teacher deals with this situation quickly and effectively without breaking up the flow of the talk, and the learner understands this movement and does not abandon the topic of his/her talk for clarifications of the TL equivalent provided.

Accordingly, the RPA sequence gives an account of how the L2 learner acquires the L2 classroom pragmatic knowledge: the way learners interact with the teacher and their peers in the TL for classroom communication, mostly when the communication focuses on understanding the meaning but not the accuracy of the language used. As a result, the RPA sequence helps gain more understanding of code-switching as an interaction-communication strategy rather than a failure in using the TL in class. In order to achieve this understanding, EFL teachers are urged to be aware of not only what emerges in their current interactions with their learners but also the learners' communicative needs in such interactions.

All things considered, the RPA sequence that the learner's use of code-switching (to know a TL equivalent of an L1 word) creates is a pattern of communication that needs to be treated with enough attention by English language teachers. The reason for this resides in the functionality this pattern has within the classroom interaction. As I briefly expose in this paper, this interactional pattern has a development that, turn by turn, carries out functionalities in the construction of the student-teacher interaction and language use in the language classroom. Finally, in order to study this pattern in depth, the suggested approach of combining Speech Act Theory and Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis becomes pertinent.

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