

Characteristics of Modifications for Interaction

Summary B

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What follows is a list of items that outline the characteristics of the speech used when native and non-native speakers of a language converse. Please consider what issues this raises for classroom interaction designed to help students learn content and language. Then given these expected characteristics of interaction, what would be optimal conditions for interaction for second language learners in the classroom?

Content:

Here is a list of what happens to content in initial interaction between native and non-native speakers of a language. This is most true when your knowledge of second language is limited.

- Use a more predictable and narrower range of
- Focus more on the here and
- Provide briefer treatment of topics with fewer information bits per topic and a lower ratio of topic-initiating to topic-continuing moves.

Interactional Structure:

These are the characteristics of the structure of a conversation between native and nonnative speakers.

- Abrupt topic shifts occur more
- Both speakers are more willing to allow fellow conversationalists to choose the
- They more easily accept unintentional topic-switches.
- Nonnative speakers are more likely to use questions to initiate
- The conversation contains more repetition from both speakers, and repeats will be exact and
- To ensure understanding, both participants check for understanding more frequently using
 - more comprehension checks
 - more confirmation checks
 - more clarification requests
- The conversation contains more
- There are more question-answer strings
- There is more decomposition—where the speakers break ideas into parts, get understanding, and then build back to more complex ideas.

Adapted with permission from:

Teemant, A. & Pinnegar, S. (2007). *Understanding Language Acquisition Instructional Guide*. Brigham Young University-Public School Partnership.



Principles of Language Acquisition

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