Teachers' Initiated Repair Patterns in Content Based Instruction Class*

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Teachers' repair is an important component of teacher talk, which has great influence on the successful communication between teachers and students and thus affects the classroom teaching efficiency. This paper centres on a part of teachers repair: Teachers' Initiated Repair and explores its patterns in content based instruction class and carries out a study on one course. By discussing the data, the author answers two questions: What are the different patterns of teachers initiated repair patterns in Chinese university classrooms? What implications do these patterns have for second language teaching?

Keywords: teachers' initiated repair patterns, teacher talk, Content Based Instruction class

Introduction

As the core of second language teaching has been changed from the cultivation of reading and writing skills to the cultivation of comprehensible abilities especially in listening and speaking, the development of communicative competence has become an important target for language teaching. The process of teaching is the process of communication, in which classroom interaction is achieved by "teachers initiation—students feedback—imitation or repetition". In this interaction, teachers' effective repair is instrumental in promoting classroom communication and improving teaching efficiency. Pica (1986) believes teachers repair facilitates faster and easier learning. Students learn syntactic structure when exposed to conversations involving large amounts of conversational repairs.

Seedhouse (2004) defines classroom repair as the treatment of trouble occurring in classroom discourse. The trouble could be anything which the participants of classroom conversation judge is impeding their communication. Classroom repair is a vital mechanism in classroom for learners and teachers to understand how breakdowns in communication and misunderstanding are repaired and how reciprocity of perspectives and inter-subjectivity of classroom are maintained. Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) point out that "nothing is, in principle, excludable from the class "repairable" (P. 363).

Classroom repair can be regarded as a special type of institutional conversation. First, classroom repair is different from natural conversation because it happens in the place of education; it is both a place for teacher to inform the students and a place for learners to acquire knowledge. Second, the definition delimitates the scope of

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classroom repair, that is, any trouble impeding the understanding of conversation and ways of dealing with it could be regarded as classroom repair. Third, the definition could inspire us on its implication for Second Language Learning and language teaching. It points out how classroom repair as an important corrective mechanism could maintain the fluency of conversation and the interaction between teacher and students in the classroom.

Teachers' repair is an important part of classroom repair and means of teaching activities, and an indispensable part of class teaching. It can help students consolidate their knowledge, achieve preferable teaching outcome, and enhance students' critical thinking.

Teachers Repair Patterns

Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) studied the repair patterns, and proposed three parts of a repair: trouble source, initiation of repair, and completion of repair. Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) also classified repair into four types: self-initiation self-repair, other-initiation self-repair, self-initiation other-repair, and other-initiation other-repair. Based on the above classifications, this paper mainly copes with teachers as the initiators of repair, thus classifies them into three types: teacher self initiated self repair (TSISR), teacher initiated students repair teacher (TISRT), teacher zero initiated self repair (TZISR).

According to Richards (2001): Content-Based Instruction (CBI) refers to an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllable. Krahne offers the following definition: It is the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no explicit effort to teach the language itself separately from the content being taught (Richard, 2001, p. 204).

Teachers in CBI must be knowledgeable in the subject matter and able to elicit that knowledge from their students. At a more detailed level, teachers have to keep context and comprehensibility foremost in their planning and presentation; they are responsible for selecting and adapting authentic materials for use in class; they become student needs analysts and have to create truly learner-centered classrooms.

As to a communication based language teaching, most of the courses are turning from a form-based instruction to content based instruction (CBI). The paper explores teachers repair in CBI settings, which will be more practical and the results can be applied to a wide language teaching circumstances.

Forms of Teachers' Repair in CBI

Teacher's self-initiated self repair in content-based class is represented mainly in three forms: repetition, enrichment, and replacement. Teacher's SISR in this teacher-oriented course will perform certain pedagogical functions.

Repetition as a form of SISR in the content-based course is a common way to emphasize the main idea of the lesson. The teacher would apply it to remind students of its importance.

Example:

T: The Speaker begins with a quotation. Right? Begins with a quotation. Is it clear? Quotations provide an initial thought or theme on which to hang speech. Preachers often hang their sermons on a quotation from the Bible. As with the rhetorical question, put the quotation in context. Also, make the quotations original. To begin a speech with a quotation, you need to do some research.

The teacher is lecturing on the methods to begin a speech. In the above example, begin with a quotation is repeated three times within a minute. It is obvious that the teacher is trying to emphasize the point. The SISR form of repetition is used for the illustration of some key words or concepts of the class content. Repetition here is not about the language form but about the class content. That is an important pedagogical implication of self-repair in university classroom.

Enrichment in content-focused classroom is also used by the teacher to add more valuable information to a less familiar word or phrase to make it more acceptable for students to comprehend. Its pedagogical function is to provide students with some easily understood material about the content of the class.

Example:

T: But in addition, I thought I would like you all to review, cause I think, you know, it is a rare opportunity to pick something among all these Asian-American writers. In your case, it would be Chinese or English.

And write, a. eh, kind of extended book review, you know, of an author, ok? Of a specific author. Right?

The above example is a case of enrichment as a device of SISR. In this monologue of the teacher, she uses "you know" as the initiation of self-correction to introduce some more specific information. The initiation of trouble source has different indicators. They could be word-searching fillers like "eh, ah", or information-requesting words like "what, sorry, pardon", or information enrichment phrases like "you know". When speakers use "you know" to search for replacement or a richer explanation, they would usually provide more information in the corrective part.

Besides repetition and enrichment, the third form of SISR used by the teacher in content-focused classroom discourse is replacement. As its name suggests, replacement is to replace one form of word with another more accurate and illustrative expression to show what the speaker really wants to convey. Its appearance in content-focused class is also abundant as is shown in the following example.

T: What does that mean, code-switching?

S1: I have read an article about code-switching.

T: Yeh.

S1: For example, a Chinese mother, as you said, ABC (American-born-Chinese) mother in American home, when she scolds her child, she would sometimes switch to Chinese.

T: Yeh.

S1: That has a different implication. That means I will be very serious with you.

T: Oh, that is the interpretation of code-switching, right? Other times you might be saying it so that your children do not understand you. Ha ha ha. Like parents, my husband and I, we, he speaks Chinese right? My children do not speak Chinese. So if my husband and I want to say something that we do not want our children to understand, we suddenly switch to Chinese, right?

In this class discussion about the meaning of "code-switching", the teacher wants to know how much the students have learnt about the concept. So she asks a question which she has already known the answer in line one.

Patterns of Teachers' Repair in CBI

Based on Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977), we classify teachers' self-repair into three types.

Teacher self initiated self repair (TSISR) is the repair initiated and repaired by teachers themselves, which is

commonly used in elaborating on the new language points.

Example:

T: boom 这个词有猛增, 激涨的意思. Baby boom 很形象, 用来描述婴儿数量的急剧增长, ah, to put it another way, 生育高峰.

The teacher intends to explain the new phrase baby boom, and the teacher initiates the self repair by saying, "ah, to put it another way". Therefore, students will have a deep impression on the following explaining "生育高峰".

Teach zero initiated self repair (TZISR) is commonly used in language teaching. Sometimes it is used to elaborate on the key point, and sometimes it is the teacher who corrects his/her mistake.

Example:

T: ...One is white, the other is black. How about their nationalities? Do they come from different countries?

Ss: Yes.

In the above example, the teacher first asked their nationalities, then made it easy by replacing nationalities with different countries.

Teacher initiated students repair teacher (TISRT) is not commonly used, however, it is used in these circumstances: students' talk needs clarification or teachers encourage students to take the initiative to think critically.

Example:

T: What is the meaning you can get? This word is easy, if it the first letter is not capitalized, it is eve in spring festival eve. In capital letter, it is another meaning..

Student: 夏娃.

T: 夏娃. Adam and Eve, right?

In the above example, after telling students eve in capital letter, it has another meaning, the teacher paused for the student to think and invited students to feedback.

Data Analysis

The data is collected from the course "Intercultural Communication", which is to improve non-English majors' cultural awareness and to improve intercultural competence. It could be categorized as content focused course. The duration of the data lasted for the whole spring semester from March to June. Altogether the author collected 20 hours of class recording and they form the data bank of the current study.

Table 1

Numbers and Percentage of Different Repair Patterns

Repair patterns	Numbers	Percentage
TSISR	68	28%
TZISR	75	31%
TISRT	56	23%
Other repair patterns	40	17%

As is shown from the above Table 1, teachers in content based course adopted self repair (83%) more than other repair patterns (17%). There is no significant difference from the three major forms of teachers self repair patterns.

As to the three forms of teachers self initiated self repair patterns: repetition, enrichment, and replacement, teachers showed different preference.

Table 2

Numbers and Percentage of Different Forms of TSISR

Forms of TSISR	Numbers	Percentage
Repetition	43	42%
Enrichment	33	32%
Replacement	27	26%

As is indicated from the above Table 2, the dominant repair patterns in content-focused classroom are the teachers self initiated self repair. And teachers prefer to use repetition more than enrichment and replacement to perform TSISR.

Conclusion

This study is only about one course and focuses on one teacher, therefore, it is limited to some certain aspect. However, the author just intends to show a small part of teacher initiated repair pattern in a given context: content based instruction (CBI) class, to shed light on its function and potential application in language teaching, thus give insight into pedagogical design.

The studies of teachers' classroom repair have helped language teachers in their L2 (Second Language) classroom teaching, and syllabus design. Since teachers' classroom repair of Chinese university is an understudied field, the present study hopes to fill this gap and provide some pedagogical suggestions for L2 teaching under Chinese circumstances.

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