Finnish Students' Dedication to and Interaction in Communicative Oral Practice in Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract—**The aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how Finnish-speaking students' communicative oral practice in a foreign language, Swedish[1], is carried out through cooperative scheme-based and elaboration tasks in the language classroom. The specific focus is on the students' dedication and participatory interaction. The study is carried out as a didactically oriented micro-ethnographic case study, in which the teacher acts as a researcher of her own teaching. The data, gathered through tape recordings of the students' oral practice, are analysed through qualitative content analysis methods supplemented with some quantifications. The main research findings are that a good deal of dedication to the oral practice, as well as cooperation, and interactive and self-generated communication in Swedish are realised. Many students' use of L1, Finnish, especially when creating intersubjectivity and in scaffolding, is also evident.**

Index Terms—**foreign language teaching, oral practice, communicative practice, cooperative task, schema-based task, elaboration task**

I. INTRODUCTION

The motivation of this study lies in two aspects. First, communicative language teaching (CLT) has been the official target of foreign language (FL) teaching in Finland since the nationwide core curriculum in 1994, but the implementation of the communicative target in Finnish FL classrooms has been neither widely discussed nor researched. There are, however, some findings (e.g., Alanen, 2000; Harjanne & Tella, 2009; Harjanne, Reunamo & Tella, 2015) that show a call for a change of FL pedagogies from more traditional form-based type of teaching to communicatively oriented ones. Second, teaching of Swedish language as a mandatory school subject in Finnish schools has been a very much discussed language policy issue. It has been claimed that Finnish-speaking students lack motivation to study Swedish and that they learn only little Swedish at school (e.g., Tuokko, 2009). The need for new types of didactical methods seems to be obvious.

The aim of the present study, where the teacher acts as a researcher of her own teaching, is connected to CLT while communicative language proficiency was the goal in teaching and studying the target language. This study focuses on one method of practising a foreign language orally in the classroom: cooperative scheme-based and elaboration tasks designed according to the principles of CLT. Communicative oral practice in this study means instructed textbook-based or applied practice, where the students use Swedish in context-related communication while generating their own language. The specific focus of this study is on participation interaction in communicative oral practice in Swedish in the language classroom.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the theoretical framework of this study (Figure 1) communicative oral practice is seen as part of FL didactics, a science of the teaching–studying–learning (TSL) process (e.g., Kansanen, 1990; Uljens, 1997). FL didactics comprises the complex FL teaching reality, including not only teaching and learning but also studying as an equal concept (e.g., Harjanne & Tella, 2007). Within this didactic framework, oral practice is linked to students' active and purposeful studying.

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[1] Swedish is the second national language in Finland. In this study, it is considered a foreign language from the students' point of view whose mother tongue is Finnish.
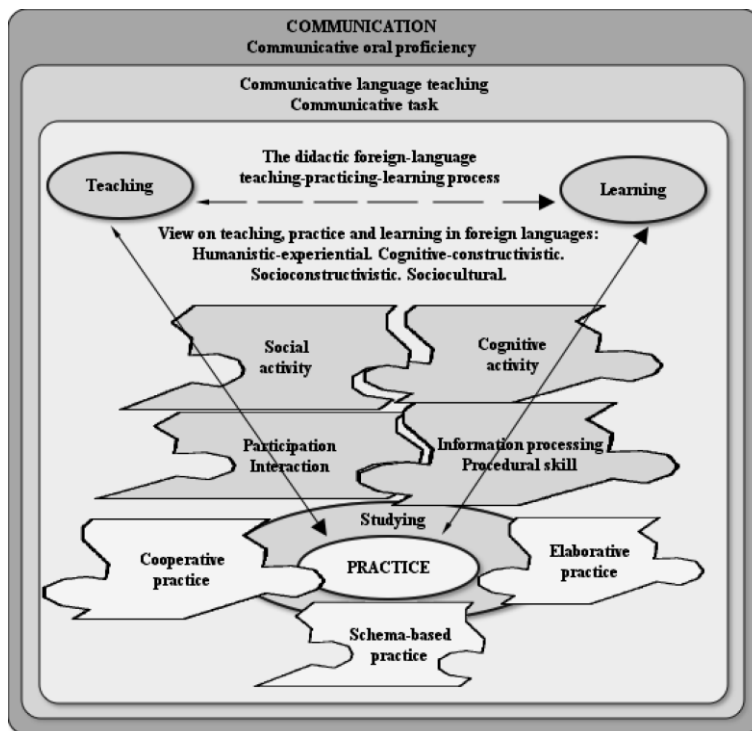
Figure 1. Communicative oral practice through cooperative scheme-based and elaboration tasks
within the didactic teaching–studying–learning process (Figure in Finnish, Harjanne, 2006, p. 8).

In this study communicative oral practice is linked to CLT methodology (e.g., Brown, 2001; Ellis, 2003), which represents a student-centred approach to FL teaching in which the student is seen as an interactive participator in communication, the language as context-related communication and FL learning as a social, affective and cognitive process. Communicative oral practice, as CLT, aims at communicative language proficiency, i.e. communicative competence (Common European Framework, CEFR, 2001) or, rather, intercultural communicative competence (e.g., Byram, 2010). The key component of this study is the communicative task, the various definitions of which mostly emphasise pragmatic language use, focus on meaning, communication related to real life communication and a communicative goal (e.g., Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 2003). Both authentic and pedagogical tasks are defined in the CEFR (2001, p. 158) as communicative when "they require learners to comprehend, negotiate and express meaning in order to achieve a communicative goal".

Communicative oral practice in the present study is implemented through tasks conceptualized within a CLT framework, being cooperative scheme-based and elaboration tasks. Scheme-based tasks (e.g., Bartlett, 1932/1995; Kristiansen, 1992) and elaboration tasks (e.g., Anderson, 1995; Craik & Tulving, 1975) are based on the cognitive-constructivist conception of learning in which FL learning is considered an individual construction of knowledge and skills, requiring thinking, comprehension and much practice. As for oral practice through cooperative tasks (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Nunan, 1992), it is based on the humanistic-experiential conception of learning (e.g., Kohonen, 1992; Kolb, 1984) and shares common principles with the socio-constructivist conception of learning (e.g., von Wright, 1992) and the socio-cultural approach to learning (e.g., Lantolf, 2000) as well. In oral practice through cooperative tasks, students have individual and shared responsibility for interactive communication. Hence, in communicative oral practice through cooperative and scheme-based elaboration tasks, FL learning is seen holistically. The socio-cultural view on learning as participation (e.g., Sfard 1998, p. 7) informs the communicative oral practice in this study. Consequently, it is seen that communication in social interaction promotes FL learning and, crucially, it is seen as learning in a fundamental way, as van Lier (2000, p. 246) puts it. Additionally, communication in social interaction is thus seen as an evidence of communicative competence (see Säljö, 2001, p. 114).

III. THE STUDY

A. Research Task

The aim of the present study is to describe, analyse and interpret how Finnish-speaking lower and upper secondary students carry out communicative oral practice in a foreign language, Swedish, in the language classroom. The research task is specified in the following research questions:

1. In what ways do Finnish-speaking students dedicate themselves to communicative oral practice through cooperative scheme-based and elaboration tasks in a foreign language, Swedish?

2. Which interaction strategies do Finnish-speaking students use in communicative oral practice through cooperative scheme-based and elaboration tasks in in a foreign language, Swedish?

The answers to research questions were gathered through tape recordings of the students' communicative oral practice in the classroom.

B. Research Design

This study represents a qualitative, didactically oriented, micro-ethnographic case study, including features of explorative practice where the teacher acts as a researcher of her own teaching. The study, conducted in a natural classroom environment, aims to understand and interpret communicative oral practice in line with qualitative research strategy (Bryman, 2001, pp. 278–280; Creswell, 2003, pp. 181–182). The focus is a topical and complex social phenomenon in a natural context, that is, the students' communicative oral practice in Swedish in the language classroom, and on communicative features and patterns of social face-to-face interaction (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 8–9; Yin, 2003, pp. 1–19). In line with the nature of a case study, the students' oral practice was observed from different perspectives and described and interpreted systematically and in detail, including direct quotations, which help to form a comprehensive understanding of the practice as a whole (see Syrjälä, 1994, p. 13). Further, in the spirit of exploratory practice (Allwright, 2003), the teacher as a researcher in the present study hoped to gain an in-depth understanding of her students' practice trying to analyse and understand what is occupying her mind in the classroom, that is, communicative oral practice in Swedish, thereby promoting professional development as a teacher.

C. Data Collection

The data were collected from two groups of Finnish-speaking students from a Helsinki-area school: a group of lower secondary students (N=13) and a group of upper secondary students (N=9). The lower secondary students had completed only about 40 lessons of 45 minutes in Swedish. The upper secondary students had studied Swedish for 6 years (primary school and lower secondary school) and for less than one school year (40–50 lessons of 45 minutes) in upper secondary school. The difference in language proficiency between these two students groups is, however, out of the scope of this study.

The students' instructed oral practice in this study was tape-recorded. The tape recordings cover five cooperative scheme-based and elaboration oral tasks on different topics (Table 1). The cooperative tasks were designed following the principles of 'learning together' approach (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 2002) or jigsaw learning technique (e.g., Aronson et al., 1978) highlighting reciprocal responsibility for participation in communicative oral practice and scaffolding. In the scheme-based tasks the textbook passage was practised as hierarchical communicative wholes and as for the elaboration tasks, they required self-generated elaboration of the language (see Kristiansen, 1998). The text-based practice refers to tasks where the textbook passage was practised as such, while in the applied practice the textbook passage was applied and linked to new communication contexts. The students were made aware of the meaning and the goal of communicative oral practice in a foreign language and they were supervised systematically in study strategies.

TABLE 1.
TASKS USED IN THE STUDY.

School level	Text to be elaborated	Task description	Cooperative technique
Lower secondary	På varuhuset [At the department store]	Text-based scheme-based elaboration of a textbook passage using a role-play task (a shop assistant and a consumer)	'Learning together' approach
	På varuhuset [At the department store]	Applied scheme-based elaboration of a textbook passage using a role-play task (a shop assistant and a consumer)	'Learning together' approach
Upper secondary	De unga i de vuxnas värld [Youth in adults' world]	Applied elaboration of a textbook passage by adding own views and experiences connected to the topic	Jigsaw learning technique
	Hösten [Autumn]	Text-based elaboration of a textbook passage by retelling a story about a young boy's life	Jigsaw learning technique
	Finnarnas och finlandssvenskarnas Fester och traditioner [The Finns' and Finland-Swedes' celebrations and traditions]	Applied elaboration of textbook passages using a role-play task (a Finnish exchange student and a Finland-Swedish exchange student)	'Learning together' approach

The tape-recorded data were transcribed and the most noticeable mispronunciations were marked. The students were coded to allow anonymity. The extra data include study course plans, lesson plans, study instructions and video recordings of the lessons.

D. Data Analysis

The data were systematically observed and analysed in the spirit of empirical induction (see Grönfors, 1982, p. 31) and linking the analysis to the theoretical framework of the study (see Eskola & Suoranta, 2000, p. 186). The transcribed tape recordings were primarily analysed through qualitative content analysis methods and supplemented with some quantifications (e.g., Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002). The focus of the analysis was on the content and typical participatory features of the students' communication (see Tesch, 1990, pp. 60–61). The students' communicative oral practice was not categorised beforehand, but was considered context-related including the complex interaction in the

classroom (e.g., van Lier 1988, pp. 13–14, p. 24). The analysis was thus open to unexpected findings as well. Categories linked to each research question were created from the data, and they were connected to the communication context and supported with direct quotations from the students' speech. The long-term analysis process covering a span of a couple of years went on as a recursive and evolving cycle between data collection, modification of the research questions, data categorisation and interpretation. (See Bryman, 2001, p. 180, pp. 264–291, p. 381; Creswell, 2003, p. 14, pp. 181–182.) The data analysis was implemented in three stages, from reduction through clustering to abstraction, as described by Miles and Huberman (1994). At the third stage of abstraction, the interpretation included the idea of 'what were the lessons learned', as presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

IV. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The research findings and their interpretations are discussed below according to the corresponding research question. In the oral practice the students used the target language Swedish [Swe] and also their mother tongue Finnish [Fi], both translated into English in the student quotations below.

A. Dedication to Communicative Oral Practice in Swedish

The Finnish-speaking students' dedication to communicative oral practice in Swedish through cooperative scheme-based and elaboration tasks manifested itself strongly in three main categories: (i) negotiation of task performance, (ii) negotiation of task topic, and (iii) fun. Here, negotiation of task performance is seen as linked to the students' dedication to communicative oral practice, although because of its role in steering the interaction process, it could also be seen to represent interaction strategies (see CEFR, 2001, p. 84). As for fun, it is interpreted as the students' dedication to practice, when the task contents or an episode in the practice they generate provides them genuine amusement and they have a good time as in real-life communication.

Negotiation of task performance. Negotiation of task performance was found in all five tasks, in a total of 110 lines (us[2] 72, ls[3] 38), and in almost every cooperative pair's practice (27/31). The frequency varied, however, between the different pairs. Negotiation of task performance focused on five dimensions: the task itself (46/110), how to start the task (12/110), how to continue the task (25/110), how to steer back the communication to the task (10/110) and how to finish the task (17/110). Negotiation of task performance focused, thus, mainly on the task itself. The students checked that they had understood how the task should be performed and cleared up any confusion. They confirmed what they were expected to say and clarified whether performance of the task was sufficient.

(us 14 I B1+2 FF)
TEACHER (*in the background*): en minut kvar [Swe] / *[one minute left]*
L-- vi måste också lite mera smalltalk [Swe] / *[we must also little more small talk]*
J ja [Swe] / *[yes]*
L det finns - det blåser idag [Swe] / *[there is - it is blowing today]*
J ja det är ganska kallt också [Swe] / *[yes, it is rather cold too]*
(ls 27 Ib Vs)
TEACHER (*in the background*): en minut--- sen slutar vi [Swe] / *[one minute--- then we'll finish]*
E (*laughing*) ---- otetaan tää vielä kerran --- [Fi] / *[let's practise this once again]*
M otetaan toistepäin [Fi] / *[let's change the roles]*
E ei - här i mitten se on hyvä … [Fi–Swe–FI] / *[no - here in the middle it is good…]*
joo tää on ihan hyvä okej hyvä aloitetaan [Fi] / [*yeah this is quite good OK good let's start]*
M mää haluan olla tuo (*unclear*) [Fi] / *[I want to be that one (unclear)]*
E ei [Fi] / *[no]*
M miksei [Fi] / *[why not]*
E no okej [Fi] / *[well OK]*

Negotiation focusing on starting the task was often linked to the students' roles in the task or to simulating communication outside the classroom. Negotiation of task performance also focused on how to carry on the task, which happened more often in the lower secondary students' practice than among the upper secondary students. It is interesting that negotiation of the task performance focused least on steering back the communication to the task. The students' negotiations focused on finishing the task too, which, interestingly enough, happened more often in the upper secondary students' practice than among lower secondary students. The analysis showed surprisingly that first, communication not relating to the task was minimal and, second, that the students used the whole practice time, without exception. The students did not stop practising until the teacher said it was time to stop, and they often continued practising even after that. The students seemed, thus, to get involved in the communicative oral practice in earnest and feel responsible for its success in the spirit of cooperative learning principles.

The students' broad and diverse negotiations of task performance in this study are in line with the research findings of Platt and Brooks (1994), for instance. The students' negotiations included two crucial features highlighted in the

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[2] *us* stands for upper secondary education (grades 10–12)
[3] *ls* stands for lower secondary education (grades 7–9)

sociocultural approach: intersubjectivity and scaffolding (e.g., Roebuck, 2000; Wells, 1999). Intersubjectivity manifested itself in a variety of ways. The students tried to achieve a mutual orientation of the task and a joint understanding of its objectives and desired performance, and they steered joint participation to meet the objectives of the task. According to Antón and DiCamilla (1999), this kind of intersubjectivity in communication makes scaffolding possible, a finding in this study too. While communicating, the students gave help and feedback to their interlocutors at appropriate times, and scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) came thus true. Negotiation of task performance can be seen to reflect the students' interest in performing the task and consequently is interpreted in this study as dedication to oral practice. When negotiating, the students encouraged their interlocutors to perform the task and controlled their performance – hence, they took on the role that traditionally has belonged to the teacher.

Negotiation of task topic. Negotiation of task topic was not at all as common and diverse as negotiation of task performance. The data included a total of 60 lines in which the students negotiated task topic, all of which occurred in the upper secondary students' practice. The students posed amplifying questions about the topic several times (12/60), reflected on the task topic only a few times (5/60), and only once (1/60) asked their interlocutor's personal opinion about the topic. The upper secondary students mostly linked the topic to their own milieu (22/60) and added their own opinions to the topic (20/60).

(us 6 IIABC R)
H jag tror att öh – ungdomar vill få mera [Swe] / *[I think that h'm – young people want to have more]*
A+M ja [Swe] / *[yes]*
H ansvar [Swe] / *[responsibility]*
A ja de vill bli mera självständiga och fri/a(?) [Swe] / *[yes they want to become more independent]*
M ja – – [Swe] / *[yes]*
H jag tror att det är ganska bra [Swe] / *[I think that it's quite good]*
A det är mycket bra tycker jag [Swe] / *[it's very good I think]*
M ja [Swe] / *[yes]*

Naturally, negotiation of task topic was closely connected to the task type. A communicative task should be related to real life and be meaningful for the students. The upper secondary students' tasks that inspired the most negotiation of the topic were a discussion about the relationships between youth and adults (*De unga i de vuxnas värld)* and a role-play about Finns' and Finland-Swedes' celebrations and traditions (*Finnarnas och finlandssvenskarnas fester och traditioner).* The task *Hösten* [Autumn], in which students elaborated on a story by retelling it, did not motivate them to negotiate the topic.

Negotiation of task topic is an example of interactive communication and can be interpreted as an evidence of interest in the topic. Discussion unrelated to the task can instead be interpreted as lack of interest in the task, but such conversation was very uncommon in the data. It should be noted that it was difficult to interpret unambiguously which speech was unrelated to the task, because it was seen in this study, in line with the objectives and principles of communicative oral practice, that discussion in a FL classroom includes deviations from the topic just as discussion outside the classroom.

The lower secondary students did not negotiate the task topic at all in the way the upper secondary students did. Their scheme-based role-play tasks guided strictly their dialogue and did not seem to motivate them to negotiate the topic. It is also important to note that they were very beginners in studying Swedish and their command of Swedish was thus very low. Instead of negotiating the topic, they expressed their interest in it, for instance, with an excited tone of voice and by actively elaborating on the topic with their own stories.

Fun. The third very evident manifestation of the students' dedication to communicative oral practice was fun that is, playing with words, enjoying themselves or having a good time with the task, verbally or otherwise. Fun was identified in 108 lines (us 85, ls 23). Verbally expressed fun was more evident in the upper secondary students' oral practice. The lower secondary students' fun did not explicitly manifest itself as words, presumably due to their lower proficiency in Swedish, but rather in the way they fully engaged with their roles and expressed their lines. The students' fun was focused on the task topic (61/108) or the communication context of the tasks (24/108) generated by themselves and the Swedish language (23/108). Fun focusing on the task topic was thus most common. In the role-play on the Finns' and Finland-Swedes' celebrations and traditions, the upper secondary students enjoyed themselves, for instance, by overplaying the Finns' and Finland-Swedes' stereotypical characteristics and habits.

(us 15 II B2+4 FF)
L hej -- spelar du handboll [Swe] / *[hey -- do you play handball]*
A ja - det är en mycket fin sport [Swe] / *[yeah - it's a very fine sport]*
L ja - jag spelar handboll i en segelbåt [Swe] / *[yeah - I play handball in a sailing boat]*
A *(laughing)* ja – [Swe] / *(laughing) [yes]*
L+A ja -- jag seglar också… [Swe] / *[yes -- I sail as well…]*
A jag seglar världen runt… [Swe] / *[I sail round the world…]*
L just som Hjallis Harkimo… [Swe] / *[just as Hjallis Harkimo…]*
A och alltid havsintressekläder [Swe] / *[and always sea hobby clothes]*
…seglingjacka och seglingbyxor och [Swe] / *[…sailing coat and sailing trousers and]*

L ja, och seglinghatt och ja … [Swe] / *[yes, and sailing hat and yeah…]*
A … och min väska är som segelbåt [Swe] / *[…and my bag is like a sailing boat]*
…och vi har ankora i öronen… [Swe] / *[…and we have anchors in the ears…]*
L ja, och jag har en fisk i fickan... (*laughing together*) [Swe] / *[yes, and I have a fish in the pocket…]* (*laughing together*)

As for the lower secondary students, they had a good time when shopping for clothes, for instance, making fun of the size, model, colour and price of the clothes, and when trying on the clothes.
(ls 32 IVb Vs)
S det är snygg kan jag prova dem [Swe] / *[it is cool may I try them on]*
B ja provrummet är därborta i fönstret [Swe] / *[yes the fitting-room is there in the window]*

The students also enjoyed the communication context of the tasks, for instance, by cheerfully overacting. Further, they had a great time with the Swedish language (23/108) by playing with it and making light of their own linguistic problems. All in all, the students were relaxed and had fun with many aspects of the tasks. The fun in the students' oral practice in Swedish was unexpected, but positive and surprisingly varied.

In summary, the students' dedication to the communicative oral practice, by negotiating the task performance and the topic and by having fun, shows that interactive communication and cooperation were realised in their oral practice. The students worked in a target-oriented and responsible way and encouraged their interlocutors to carry on practicing and communicating in the spirit of the principles of cooperative learning. However, a common feature in the students' oral practice in Swedish was that they used their mother tongue Finnish as well. This was either a compensation strategy or an avoidance strategy (CEFR, 2001), but it can also be interpreted as the students' attempts at clear and economic expression (see Poulisse, 1997). At the same time, use of the Finnish language can be seen as the students' way of orientating themselves with the task and creating intersubjectivity, a view which is supported by socio-cultural research (e.g., Antón & DiCamilla 1999).

B. Interaction Strategies Used in Communicative Oral Practice in Swedish

Interaction is the core of dialogic oral communication and consequently, the core of communicative oral practice. Interaction strategies are seen in this study in line with CEFR (2001, pp. 84–85) to belong to communication strategies and to refer to students' receptive and productive strategies and strategies used in the management of the interaction process and construction of joint discourse. The main interaction strategies used by the Finnish-speaking students in oral practice in Swedish were (i) collective creation of discussion and (ii) asking for and giving linguistic help.

Collective creation of discussion. Collective creation of discussion refers to participatory talk. The students created discussion collectively mainly by echoing their interlocutor's speech or filling in if the interlocutor did not know how to formulate her/his thoughts. Collective creation of discussion was substantially richer in the upper secondary students' practice than in the lower secondary students' practice. When echoing their interlocutor's speech, the upper secondary students gave feedback by telling, for instance, their opinion of what they had heard, expressing that they had understood their interlocutor or encouraging her/him to continue talking. They typically echoed their interlocutor's speech with paralinguistic expressions according to Swedish pragmatics, which is much more abundant in Swedish than in Finnish. However, the use of the paralinguistic expressions was not always idiomatic, and the lexical variation was quite limited. The upper secondary students echoed the interlocutor's speech by being interactive listeners, which meant that they showed interest in their interlocutor's speech and reacted to it actively and richly, for instance, by speaking at the same time and interrupting each other, laughing and using various exclamations. Intercepting each other's speech was in most cases a display of excitement at the discussion theme, in some cases a display of disagreement.
(us 6 IIABC R)
A de är – men vi kan också öh tänka oss lite vad som de föräldrarna tänkar så… [Swe] / *[they are – but we can also hm think little what the parents think so…]*
M ja [Swe] / *[yes]*
A vi förstår bättre dem dom [Swe] / *[we understand better them them]*
M ja – (*a sigh*) jag tycker att [Swe] / *[yes – (a sigh) I think that]*
H jag tror… [Swe] / *[I think…]*
M ja [Swe] / *[yes]*
H att de måste också komma ihåg att vi har nya problem [Swe] / *[that they have to remember that we have new problems]*
M ja [Swe] / *[yes]*
A jo [Swe] / *[yes]*
M just [Swe] / *[just]*
H dom har inte sådana problem än vi har nu [Swe] / *[they have not such problems than we have now]*
A jo [Swe] / *[yes]*
M ja [Swe] / *[yes]*
H och vi har …[Swe] / *[and we have…]*
M kanske [Swe] / *[maybe]*
H kanske inte sådana problem än dom hade [Swe] / *[maybe not such problems than they had]*

A och jag tycker att de skulle bekanta sig med de nya problem [Swe] / *[and I think that they should get acquainted with the new problems]*

M ja [Swe] / *[yes]*

A så de kan hjälpa och förstå… [Swe] / *[so they can help and understand…]*

M jo [Swe] / *[yes]*

A olika saker [Swe] / *[different things]*

M ja [Swe] / *[yes]*

The lower secondary students echoed their interlocutor's speech by showing enthusiasm or hesitation, typically through minimal paralinguistic expressions. It is important to note that they echoed their interlocutor's speech more than the scheme instructed only in the applied scheme-based practice and not at all in the text-based scheme-based practice. The applied practice encouraged students to engage with their role.

The upper and lower secondary students created discussions collectively and kept the discussions alive also by filling in their interlocutor's speech if she/he did not know how to formulate her/his thoughts.

(us 19 III A4+B4 FF)

A …och vi väljer en lucia [Swe] / *[…and we elect a Lucia]*

S jo [Swe] / *[yes]*

A som är finlandssvensk flicka [Swe] / *[who is Finnish-Swedish girl]*

S har har [Swe] / *[has has]*

A har lång hår [Swe] / *[has long hair]*

S hår jo [Swe] / *[hair yes]*

(ls 27 Ib Vs)

M hej du – [Swe] / *[hey you –]*

E glömde [Swe] / *[forgot]*

M glömde din paraply [Swe] / *[forgot your umbrella]*

E jasså tack så mycket - hejdå [Swe] / *[oh well thanks a lot - bye]*

The students, especially the upper secondary students, seemed thus create collectively further discussion (e.g., Antón & DiCamilla, 1999), which bears features of scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) or collaborative dialogue (Swain, 2000). Cooperation and the principles of dynamic, dialogic speech (e.g., Säljö, 2000) were realised in their communication. It was found that interactive listening and creating speech collectively compelled the discussion to continue.

Asking for and giving linguistic help. Asking for and giving linguistic help occurred in 242 lines centring on the upper secondary students' practice (us 204, ls 38) and focussing on vocabulary (213/242). Many students' command of vocabulary understandably was quite limited in the practice phase, leading to misunderstandings and negotiations of meaning. The students asked for lexical help indirectly, by interrupting a sentence, code switching or hesitating, and directly using Swedish or Finnish. The interlocutors reacted more often to a direct request for help than to an indirect request. There were many episodes when the speaker then used the given word in her/his own speech, paralleling pushed output (Swain, 1985). However, it also happened quite often that the speaker just listened to the given word but did not use it in her/his own speech. The students also corrected themselves by reformulating their own expressions.

(us 15 II B2+4 FF)

A ja, jag hade hals-- [Swe] / *[yes, I have throat--]*

L ont i halsen [Swe] / *[sore throat]*

A ja ont i halsen… [Swe] / [*yes sore throat]*

(us 10 IIb ABC H)

P …han bara sa vad han vill och slutade – vad [Swe] mikä se on keskustelu [Fi] / *[…he only said what he wants and finished – what it is keskustelu]*

N diskutera [Swe] / *[discuss]*

P nå *(a laugh)* vad just *(a laugh)* och… [Swe] / *[well (a laugh) what just (a laugh) and…]*

(ls 28 IIa Vs)

B ja öh *(unclear)* miten se meni [Fi] / *[and hm (unclear) what should I say]*

A betalar du [Swe] / *[do you pay]*

B betalar du kort med kort eller kontant [Swe] / *[do you pay credit card with credit card or in cash]*

(ls 24 IIIa Vts)

L det blir två-- [Swe] / *[it costs two--]*

M två hundra sjuttio kronor [Swe] / *[two hundred seventy kronor]*

L älä, mä oli justiin sanomassa *[Fi]*…två hundra sjuttio kronor [Swe] / *[don't, I was just about to say two hundred seventy crowns]*

One way to give lexical help was negotiation of meaning (see Long, 1996). The tasks used in this study represent task features that are found to promote negotiation of meaning (see Ellis, 2003): cooperative group work, information exchange needed or required, detailed information, a cognitively demanding task, repetition of the task, and a familiar theme and interlocutor. The upper secondary students checked that their interlocutor had understood what was said.

They did this, however, only rarely in an authentic way in Swedish, but translated what they had said directly into Finnish. Sometimes, an interlocutor also made sure that she/he had understood or requested clarification; such cases of negotiation of meaning can also be seen as listener-oriented discourse strategies (see Ellis, 2003). The listener usually requested clarification in Swedish, but the speaker reacted nearly every time in Finnish. It could cautiously be assumed, in accordance with many researchers (e.g., Long 1996), that negotiation of meaning related to communication gaps promoted language learning as well.

(us 18 II A1+3 FF)
H nå ja visst är vi ytlig *[Swe]* det är pinnallinen [Fi] / *[well yes all right we are shallow – it is pinnallinen]*
(us 18 II A1+3 FF)
H bal - är det *[Swe]* tanssiaiset [Fi] / *[ball - is it tanssiaiset]*
P jo [Swe] / *[yes]*
(us 17 I A3+4 FF)
P och struvor och… [Swe] / *[and May-day fritters and…]*
S hm … [Swe] / *[hm…]*
P vet du [Swe] / *[do you know]*
S jag vet inte vad struvor är [Swe] / *[I don't know what May-day fritter is]*
P… struvor är [Swe] tippaleipä [Fi] / *[…May-day fritter is tippaleipä]*
(us 14 I B1+2 FF)
L är vi högljudda [Swe] / *[we are loud]*
J vad är det [Swe] / *[what is it]*
L kovaäänisiä [Fi] / *[kovaäänisiä]*
(us 19 III A4+B4 FF)
A viktigt det är mycket viktigt för oss och vi går till julotta [Swe] / *[important it is very important to us and we go to julotta]*
S vad är julotta [Swe] / *[what is julotta]*
A det är vi går till kyrkan på den tjugofemte december… det är mycket tidigt på morgonen det är sex sju [Swe] / *[it is we go to church the twenty fifth December… it is very early in the morning it is six seven]*

Asking for and giving lexical help in this study has features that can be related to scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). The students seemed to be quite aware of when their interlocutor wanted help with vocabulary (e.g., Ohta, 2000). The scaffolding seemed most beneficial when the students gave help with lexical problems their interlocutor noticed herself/himself (see Ohta, 2000). As in earlier research (e.g., Donato, 1994; Wells, 1999), it was found in this study that scaffolding does not necessarily require any 'real' expert, as it is possible in interaction with peers as well. 'Expertise' is thus a flexible concept. Donato's (1994, p. 46) statement that foreign language speakers can, at the same time, be individually novices and communally experts, came more or less true in this study too. However, this study showed, as many other studies have (e.g., Swain & Lapkin, 1998), that peer scaffolding was not always adequate or systematic and that there were many situations where a 'real' expert was needed, especially concerning problems with accuracy and pronunciation. The students also used their first language, Finnish, while scaffolding, which is in line with many research findings (e.g., Antón & DiCamilla, 1999). It should, however, be noted that according to the sociocultural view, the first language can mediate foreign language learning. Asking for and giving lexical help led to increased awareness of vocabulary (*noticing hypothesis,* Schmidt, 1990) and more comprehensible speech (*pushed output,* Swain, 1985) and crucially, helped the communication to continue. From the Finnish-speaking students' willingness to ask for and give lexical help in oral practice in Swedish, it can be understood that they found the classroom safe (see Swain, 2000, p.100).

The students seemed more focused on meaning than on form in their communication. Asking for and giving help with grammar and pronunciation happened rarely: grammar 15/242, pronunciation 14/242. The students had no real need to pay attention to problems in grammar and pronunciation, because they experienced no communication breaks thanks to their common mother tongue.

In summary, the interaction strategies that the Finnish-speaking students used, i.e. collective creation of discussion and asking for and giving lexical help, show that an important amount of participatory interaction and cooperation was realised in their oral practice in Swedish through cooperative scheme-based and elaboration tasks. In many respects, the students co-constructed speech in Swedish oral practice in the language classroom just as they might do in real-life communication.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this study was to get in-depth understanding of Finnish-speaking students' communicative oral practice in a foreign language, Swedish, through cooperative scheme-based and elaboration tasks in a FL classroom focusing on the students' dedication and participatory interaction. The goal of the communicative oral practice was to make speaking a foreign language natural in the classroom, transforming the classroom, at the same time, into an encouraging and constructive practice environment. The research findings indicate that dedication to the communicative oral practice manifested itself considerably in negotiation of task performance and negotiation of task topic and fun. Further,

clear evidence of participatory interaction as collective creation of discussion and asking for and giving lexical help was found. It is noteworthy that the students fully devoted themselves to speaking Swedish with unexpected frequency and had some genuine fun, too, when practising Swedish orally. In addition, there was very little discussion, if any, that did not relate directly to the task and they made the most of the whole practice time. In light of these findings, the CLT principles of meaningful tasks, students as active participants in interactive communication and self-generated communication were considerably realised through cooperative scheme-based and elaboration tasks in this study, which is not always the case in Finnish FL classrooms, as for example, Nikula's (2007) research shows.

There were two more findings important to note and reflect upon: the use of the mother tongue Finnish and the substantial quantitative and qualitative variation in the cooperative groups' communication. The students mostly used Finnish when orientating themselves with the task, as well as when creating intersubjectivity in linguistic problems and in scaffolding. Still, this is in accordance with socio-cultural research findings, which claim that using one's mother tongue is an inevitable part of the foreign language practice and learning process (e.g., Donato, 2000). Another baffling finding was the large variation in the cooperative pairs' communication. The lower and upper secondary students' participation in interactive communication apparently depended on the interlocutors and the task, a finding that, while not surprising, is pedagogically challenging and needs to be reflected upon further.

Research findings are always context-related and in this study the communicative oral practice was naturally influenced by many socio-culturally context-related factors linked to the classroom, students and tasks. For instance, the systematic discussion about the goal of communicative oral practice and the systematic supervision in study strategies probably contributed to the students' communicative and participatory levels in oral practice. Further, the oral practice was naturally influenced by the difference in the students' language proficiency. The upper secondary students' pragmatic competences were substantially better due to their much more courses in Swedish. As for the influence of the tasks, the upper secondary students' tasks represented cooperative elaboration tasks that enabled relatively free discussion, whereas in the lower secondary students' cooperative elaboration tasks, the discussion was guided by a scheme. In addition, in the text-based practice the discussion was guided by the text, whereas in applied practice more free discussion, for instance, linking the topic to one's own milieu and adding one's own opinion to the topic were the goal.

How trustworthy these research findings are can be discussed from many perspectives. Here I focus on credibility, which is one criterion of trustworthiness (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 294–301) and is connected with all stages of the research process (see Creswell, 2003, p. 196; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 342). In this study, the main data were collected tape-recording the students' oral practice in Swedish in a natural classroom context. An audio-visually recorded oral practice would naturally give a broader and richer picture, but the videotaped data was rejected, because, for instance, extra-linguistic features fell outside the scope of this study. Instead, the tape-recorded data were transcribed literally, which proved to be adequate to show how the oral practice progressed. However, there are concerns with the credibility of the data collection in this study as well. Referring to Creswell's (1998, p. 197) observer effect, one could, for instance, question whether the tape-recorded oral practice is similar to practice in the classroom without tape-recording. The students in this study were, however, accustomed to being tape-recorded and videotaped in Swedish lessons. Another problem with credibility could be that the students tried to be better than they actually were or that they wanted to please the teacher by practising in a way that they thought would meet the teacher's expectations (e.g., LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 344). However, neither the students nor the teacher as a researcher knew in advance which tape-recorded lessons would constitute the actual research data. Moreover, to be a teacher as a researcher and to know well the research object enabled a kind of triangulation in the data collection in addition to the tape recordings of the oral practice. This kind of triangulation offered a broad perspective of the reality under investigation and is seen as a vital way to increase credibility (e.g., Creswell, 1998, p. 202, p. 213).

According to qualitative content analysis methods, the credibility of the data analysis was confirmed by categorising the transcribed tape-recorded data a few times within the span of a couple of years; in spite of this time span, the categories did not change substantially. Furthermore, the quotations linked to the categories also help the reader to judge the credibility of the categorisation. Admittedly, the credibility of the categorisation could have been tested using several classifiers, but the analysis currently utilised is one theoretically justified and valid means of describing and analysing the data (see Eskola & Suoranta, 2000, p. 214). In this study, the teacher as a researcher had rich contextual knowledge and experience of oral practice and could interpret the findings on the basis of her long-term interaction with the students, which is bound to endorse the credibility of the research results (e.g., Creswell, 1998, pp. 196–201). In order to judge the credibility of research results through their ability to coincide with complex social realities (e.g., Bryman, 2001, p. 272), the long-term interaction with the students enabled an on-going analysis process, which increased the credibility of the correspondence of the research results to the participants' realities (see LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 342). In addition, the credibility of the results is confirmed by findings that represent different facets of real oral practice in the classroom (see Creswell, 2003, p. 196): negative findings (e.g., lack of asking for and giving help with pronunciation), contradictory findings (e.g., use of mother tongue) and surprising findings (e.g., students having fun when carrying out various communicative tasks). The research findings show thus that *the teacher as a researcher* found something novel that the teacher *per se* had not seen in her classroom.

One of the ethical issues of a study is to secure the anonymity of the investigated subjects. In the present study the students are referred to by codes. In addition, use of the data is authorised by the students participating in this study.

In line with many qualitative research designs, this study is not transferable, since unique *in situ* situations cannot be reconstructed (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 331–332). Nevertheless, the transparent reporting of all stages and factors linked to the research context, data collection, analysis and interpretation, following Geertz's (1973) idea of thick description, enables the reader to assess the credibility and the transferability of the present study (e.g., Lincoln & Guba 1985, 316; Bryman, 2001, p. 472). While these research results cannot be generalised, this study can be seen as one model of communicative oral practice in FL and the way it can be researched.

The main claim of this study is that lower and upper secondary students can—and should—be encouraged to speak in a foreign language in the language classroom. This study invites language teachers and learners alike to pay closer attention to the role of communicative oral tasks in the FL classroom as a means to encourage students to speak in the target language. It may raise many pedagogical questions too, such as the role of a teacher's instructions in and justification of practising study strategies and the language tasks used. The research findings and the pedagogic points raised in this article can be utilised by pre-service and in-service teacher educators and language textbook writers, as well as more generally by curriculum authors, when developing communicative language teaching.

<div align="center">REFERENCES</div>

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