Harnessing Conversation Analysis-(CA-) Informed Language-in-Talk Log Assignments to Improve Conversation Skills of EFL Learners

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Abstract

Given the complexity of spoken interaction, acquiring conversation skills has been difficult for most EFL learners, and as EFL classrooms largely depend on hypothetical scripted material, learners lack explicit exposure to naturally occurring language essential for real-life interaction. This paper reports on a quasi-experimental study aiming at assessing the impact of conversation analysis- (CA) informed language-in-(natural)-talk log assignments on the development of Thai EFL learners' conversation skills. Eighty-eight second-year undergraduates at a university in southern Thailand took part in the study. As part of a monitored self-study task, the participants completed ten language-in-talk log assignments with self-selective use of audiovisuals available online. The quantitative data was collected using pre-and post-test role-plays. The qualitative data was assessed through completed log assignments, close analysis of the role-plays, and written interview for data triangulation. The findings suggested that the log assignment intervention significantly enhance participants' conversation abilities, including turn construction, turn delivery, and the sequential organization of turn-taking. The qualitative results also show that via CA-informed requirements of the log assignment, students became more aware of conversation mechanisms and language use in real-life interaction. This paper recommends that language-in-talk log assignments be incorporated into existing EFL conversation lessons.

Keywords: autonomous learning, conversation skills, conversation analysis (CA), English language teaching in Asia, learning logs

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1. Introduction

Conversation skills have been proven challenging for most English as a foreign language (EFL) learners to develop. With the growing status of English as a global language, foreign language learners have long been made aware that mastery of speaking skills is important; however, many have been struggling to improve their fluency because of the complexity and dynamics of spoken interaction (Burns, 2019; Hughes, 2017). Several researchers have investigated EFL learners in different contexts and have shown that communicating in English is difficult for most learners regardless of years of studying it (Burns, 2017; Dorji, 2017). Concurring with Burn (2019), Hughes (2017) argued that speaking is not a discrete skill, but it involves mastering a combination of skills at the global or discourse, structural, semantic levels, and the level of speech production. This staggering dynamism of spoken language has unquestionably made speaking one of the most perplexing skills to teach and learn in the EFL context.

Recent language policy developments in Asia have therefore given paramount importance to upgrading English language standards of higher education (Kirpatrick, 2012). Apart from an increasing emphasis on developing English conversation skills in institutional settings, the proliferation of online resources and availability of educational technology has also induced growing enthusiasm in today's EFL learners to learn the language beyond the classroom (Benson & Reinders, 2011). This has significantly increased autonomous learning amongst them. Furthermore, the advancement of technology offers infinite online resources, easy availability, and enhanced accessibility for non-native speakers through subtitles and captioned videos to develop conversation skills. Vanderplank (2019) stated that teachers, classrooms, and textbooks fail to provide the richness, range, and variety of language available in television and films. The exponential growth in online video content has provided learners with a great deal of choice and control of what, when, and how to watch videos. This offers EFL learners a profound opportunity to use online resources in their language learning process and exploit the affordances of technology to improve their conversation skills (Peter & Webb, 2018).

Given the positive influence of learning the language from online resources, it would therefore be worthwhile for teachers to encourage learners to make the most of online audiovisual materials by systematically integrating it into ongoing language lessons. One of the most beneficial tasks has apparently been via a log assignment, as part of learners' self-study monitored by the teacher. In the EFL

teaching context, learning logs, also referred to as log assignments, have been proven to aid directed independent learning or autonomous learning (Campisi, 2018; Chang & Geary, 2015). For instance, in teaching writing and reading skills, components of log assignments such as reflective writing, journals, diaries, and blogging have been used as a place for students to write on what they have learned in class or through readings. The logs provide additional information, such as student's personal views on the material (Pavlovich et al., 2007 as cited in Litzler & Bakieva, 2017) or reflections on their learning process and changes in their thinking and learning (Blaschke & Brindley, 2010). Log assignments may be integrated into language courses to teach English conversation considering the efficiency of the log assignment in enhancing language skills and its capacity to help in "personalizing and deepening the quality of learning" (Moon, 2010, p. 3).

Nevertheless, despite such positive effects, the amalgamation of online resources and log assignments as a language-learning tool has received limited research attention within the Thai context. Learning a language through resources such as TV programs, sitcoms and films have often been associated with concepts such as fully autonomous learning, which requires learners to take complete control over their own learning (Cole & Vanderplank, 2016). However, like other Asian learners, Thais are often stereotyped as passive or other-directed, yielding to authoritarian transmission modes of teaching which produce dependence on and reverence to the teacher (Pierson, 1996, as cited in Chang & Geary, 2015). Thai EFL learners might struggle and need more time to become fully autonomous considering heavy reliance on their teachers (Bruner et al., 2014). Thus, with the goal of improving their conversation skills, this study adopts the reactive autonomy model where teachers will help students to formulate learning directions to which they will react by selecting preferred strategies, materials, and goals (Littlewood, 1999). This model appears more appropriate for Thai learners than proactive autonomy where learners self-initiate and completely take charge of their own learning.

The study aims to highlight how the use of online resources in CA-informed language-in-talk log assignments as part of self-study monitored by the teacher will raise the learners' awareness of language used in naturally occurring conversations.

Research Question

The research question investigated in this study is:

1. In what ways does a language-in-talk log assignment help to enhance students' English conversation skills?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conversation Analysis

CA originated in sociology in the 1960s with the work of Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson. It is a sociological approach to studying everyday conversation to uncover conversation mechanisms and understand how human beings construct their social world, establish social order, and accomplish purposeful social interaction through talk (Wong & Waring, 2010; Sinwongsuwat, 2018). CA is also an invaluable toolkit enabling linguists to uncover how the language is really used and shaped in everyday talk-in-interaction (Cumming & Ono, 1997; Ford, 1993; Ochs et al., 1996, as cited in Sinwongsuwat, 2007). Conversation analysts treat talk as an object of the analysis in its own right and are interested in not only casual talk on mundane things in everyday life but also institutional talk in various settings, including doctor-patient interaction, classroom interaction, and courtroom talk (Liddicoat, 2007; Wong & Waring, 2010).

Wong and Waring (2010) claimed that learning to engage in an ordinary conversation has been one of the most difficult tasks for the second language (L2) learners. This is because conversation happens in real-time, involving the use of different linguistic codes and the exchange of both spoken and unspoken words, including non-verbal language. CA can therefore serve not only as a research tool for investigating talk-in-interaction but as an instructional tool to dissect naturally-occurring conversation to enhance L2 learners' interactional competence (IC) (Seedhouse, 2004; Wong & Waring, 2010). CA disputes the predominant view on idiosyncrasies of everyday conversation and the dominant use of hypothetical dialogues in teaching conversation in EFL classrooms.

In recent years, CA has had growing recognition, especially in the study of second language acquisition (SLA) and talk considering its applicability as a research and instructional tool (Barraja-Rohan, 2011; Gardner, 2015; Wong & Waring, 2010). In fact, the acceptance of CA as a research and instructional tool in English language

teaching (ELT) has only started to gain momentum in recent decades with the emergence of interactional linguistics as a distinct discipline (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2018). Barraja-Rohan (2011) argued that CA helps to teach IC and enhance interaction-based learning in EFL contexts. Wu (2013) added that CA could be used to develop learners' IC involving turn-taking, sequential organization, overlap, and repair through the close examination of transcribed naturally occurring conversation, enabling students to methodically pursue a conversation and deal with emerging problems to accomplish their interactional goals.

Several studies revealed that CA has been implemented successfully in the EFL classroom for different purposes, apart from developing learners' IC. Sitthikoson and Sinwongsuwat (2017) investigated the effectiveness of enhancing the conversation abilities of Thai EFL learners using explicit CA-informed telephone conversation pedagogy. By comparing the pre-and post-test scores of the participants, their findings illustrated a positive impact of a CA-informed instruction on the improvement of conversation abilities of the experimental group. The study on CA-informed conversation teaching also concurred that the overall conversational performance of learners improved significantly (Sinwongsuwat et al., 2018). Both studies credited the use of CA for the improvement of participants' conversation skills as it enabled learners to uncover types of sequences and practices occurring through a process of close analysis and rigorous observation of interaction in natural L2 settings (Gardner, 2015; Sinwongsuwat, 2007; Wong & Waring, 2010). CA can particularly provide directions in teaching conversation by exposing learners to naturally occurring spoken interactions and making explicit their orderliness including the turn-taking system, sequential organization of conversation, overlap, and repair mechanisms (Wong & Waring, 2010).

Despite the successful implementation of CA in EFL classrooms, an increasing body of research conducted in Thailand from a conversation analytic perspective into ELT is mostly inclined to the teacher-fronted approach. The previous studies mainly focused on exploring the benefits of applying CA principles and concepts to teaching English conversation through a teacher-centered approach (e.g., Sinwongsuwat et al., 2018). Several studies in the field of CA and the Thai EFL context have used CA as a teaching tool. The teacher role was pivotal as they used explicit CA-informed instruction in enhancing students' conversation

performance (see Sinwongsuwat, & Nicoletti, 2020; Sitthikoson & Sinwongsuwat, 2017; Waedaoh & Sinwongsuwat, 2019). The present study, however, departs from this point, as the research takes a student-centered approach in using CA to improve learners' conversation skills rather than depending solely on the teacher's input.

2.2. Use of Log Assignments in EFL Context

A log assignment is a pedagogical tool used to facilitate and assess language learning. It provides learners with a platform to keep a personal record of their learning process, including their preparation and effort to learn, their reflection on learning activities, instructional methods, and learning experiences (Litzler & Bakieva, 2017). A log assignment also serves as an assessment tool for instructors to regulate students' learning through evaluation and feedback. In the present study, a language-in-talk log assignment is a language learning tool that requires students to select and watch audiovisuals containing naturally occurring conversations of English speakers and maintain a weekly log. In second or foreign language learning, a log assignment is primarily used to enhance learning beyond the classroom as it accentuates favorable conditions for language learning, encourages independent learning, and supports metacognition (Moon, 2010). In particular, Lee (1997) asserted that a log has a dual purpose which supports students' metacognition. Firstly, it acts as a personal record of learners' preparation and effort to learn, their reflection on their interpretation, and their extension and reformulation of knowledge. Secondly, it serves as the source and place of their self-evaluation as they use the log to evaluate their own strategies and effort to learn. Thus, a learning log has been beneficial in creating an environment where learners can freely record, evaluate, and examine their work and learning beyond the classroom setting.

Previous studies found that learners' participation in self-study tasks, such as log assignments, exhibited their willingness to take charge of their learning, apart from the use of log assignments as a pedagogical tool. Dema and Sinwongsuwat (2020) in their study confirmed that log assignments developed students' ability to take charge of their own learning in terms of setting learning goals, selecting appropriate learning materials and methods, and evaluating their own learning. Chang and Geary (2015) also assessed the effectiveness of using self-regulated

learning logs to promote the autonomy of L2 learners in Taiwan. The result indicated that learning logs were effective in promoting learners' autonomy and students were positive toward using learning logs as a self-study task. Litzler and Bakieva (2017) found that students were optimistic about learning logs as they helped them develop autonomy while working with English beyond classroom learning. Learners became cognizant about learning strategies and equipped with different learning tools. Litzler (2014) claimed that a log assignment is worth implementing in foreign language classes considering the favorable view of students about log assignments as a learning tool, along with their significant contribution to the development of learners' autonomy.

Even though log assignments facilitated autonomous learning in other EFL contexts, the effectiveness of log assignments in developing conversation skills still remains questionable by researchers. Galloway and Rose (2014) studied the use of listening journals to raise awareness of Global Englishes in ELT. They emphasized using the listening journal as a pedagogic activity where the students listened to speakers from a range of English-speaking backgrounds or ELF interactions each week and maintained a reflective journal. The findings showed that while a listening journal was a useful pedagogical tool to expose students to diverse Englishes, it was less effective in having students reflect on ELF interactions and develop communication strategies. By contrast, Lee and Cha (2017) found that the use of listening logs for extensive listening in a self-regulated environment was proven to yield learners' growth in their ability to summarize, express feelings, and improve English proficiency. Incorporating language-in-talk log assignments into conversation class is therefore worth experimenting with given that log assignments help improve listening, reading, and writing skills and that there is limited research when it comes to conversation skills.

2.3. CA and Language-in-Talk Log Assignments
The language-in-talk log assignment integrates the CA approach and insights into natural conversation as well as the concept of autonomous learning. As ordinary everyday conversation is viewed as structured phenomenon, it adheres to the following fundamental CA principles which will enable learners to understand how grammar or language emerges and is systematically used to achieve coherent

and meaningful everyday talk (Liddicoat, 2007).

Firstly, not only does everyday conversation serve as the object of analysis for CA researchers, but it is also an essential environment for the use, development, and acquisition of language (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 1996). In line with this principle, the log assignment requires learners to choose any online audiovisuals containing natural or near-natural conversations including those found in movies, sitcoms, and TV shows to listen to or watch and practice. This helps learners to understand conversation mechanisms by examining what speakers actually do and orient to when they are using language (Sacks, 1974), apart from being a platform for language acquisition through observable naturally occurring conversation.

Secondly, to be able to closely analyze the observable naturally occurring conversation, conversation analysts rely on its recording and transcription (Liddicoat, 2007). As for the language-in-talk log assignments, learners are made to transcribe the audiovisual material they have watched. Transcribing the audiovisual chosen will allow the learners represent the conversation in printed texts, which will advance their understanding of language in social interaction. Furthermore, transcribing actual conversations will help students understand what is actually happening as speakers use their language to accomplish goals in their real-life talk. Learners are also expected to use the CA transcription convention, which captures both what is said and how it is said (Jefferson, 1985). This will help learners understand features of speech ranging from pauses, prosody, silence, and cut-offs to units of structures that carry the functional significance of real-time talk (Du Bois et al., 1992, as cited in Sinwongsuwat, 2018).

Finally, while analyzing the observable naturally occurring conversation closely, conversation analysts view language as an instrument of action (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 1996). Language enables speakers to handle daily social interaction and accomplish social actions including greeting, leave-taking, complimenting, and requesting. EFL textbooks typically have units on giving advice and expressing agreement/disagreement, but these dialogues are not always an accurate representation of what people actually say and how they actually say it in real life (Wong & Waring, 2010). Unlike typical EFL textbooks, a log assignment allows learners to explore authentic real-time talk and learn how English speakers successfully engage in social actions that include greeting, leave-taking, complimenting, requesting, and offering through talk.   The main

objective of the language-in-talk log assignment is to help EFL learners understand how certain linguistic resources are chosen to accomplish particular actions and how these choices are motivated and shaped by real-time interactional context (Davies & Elder, 2004, as cited in Singwongsuwat, 2007).

This study examines the effect of CA-informed language-in-talk log assignments on learner's conversation skills. The limited evidence in the literature addressing the scope of language-in-talk log assignments as a self-study task and audiovisuals as a source of language input in instructional settings in the Thai context makes the aim of this investigation more pragmatic.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study employed the mixed-method quasi-experimental design. As experimental research seeks to determine if a specific treatment influences an outcome (Creswell, 2014), in the present study the one-group pretest-posttest design was implemented to determine whether there is a causal relationship between the language-in-talk log assignment (treatment) and the conversation performance of participants (outcome). A pretest role-play was conducted with a group of respondents (O1); treatment (X) then occurred, and a posttest role-play with the same respondents (O2) followed as illustrated below:

Table 1 .
Quasi-experimental study

One Group Pretest-Posttest Design			
Group	**Pretest**	**Intervention**	**Posttest**
A	**O1**	**X**	**O2**

3.2. Participants

Eighty-eight second-year non-English majors taking an elective English course (890-020 English Conversation) at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai, Thailand (PSU) in the second semester of the academic year 2020 participated in the study. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method. In total, there were 10 sections of students from diverse disciplines, such as marketing, science, medical technology, accountancy, and

pharmacy, enrolled in the 890-020 English Conversation course. To ensure the participants' homogeneity, two sections of students from the accounting major, taught by the same instructor were selected as the participants. Furthermore, students with pre-requisite courses (890-002 Everyday English and 890-003 Fundamental English Reading and Writing) or O-NET scores over 50 were only eligible as the study participants. Initially, there were 100 students but data was collected from only 88 students, due to their absence in either pre-and post-test role-play. All the participants received a detailed explanation of the research, and a written consent form was signed if they agreed to participate in the research.

3.3. Research Instruments

3.3.1. Pretest and posttest role-play

To examine the difference between the conversation abilities of participants before and after the treatment, they were asked to perform a two-to-three-minute role-play in pairs. As the total number of participants taking part in this study was 88, for the role-play there were 44 pairs. Participants were paired up according to their enrollment number or the name list with the help of the course instructor. The pretest role-play was conducted before the course began and the posttest role-play occurred after the completion of log assignments. Role-play participants were provided the same situation card for both pre-and post-test role-play to stimulate conversation performance. The role-play cue cards emphasized language actions, such as greeting and introducing, leave-taking, expressing gratitude or showing appreciation, and making a request and offer.

Furthermore, all the role-play performances were video recorded and then scored by three raters. The raters included two non-native speakers and a native speaker of English. All the three raters were English teachers with varying teaching experience. One of the non-native English teachers had over 10 years of experience in teaching English to Thai undergraduates, and the other one had three years of teaching experience. The native English teacher had over 12 years of experience teaching English speaking skills with substantial exposure to teaching English as a foreign language. Scoring criteria and descriptors for the assessment were adapted from those set out by Barraja-Rohan (2011) and Luoma (2004) with a focus on different aspects of speaking: Pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammatical structure, non-verbal language, turn delivery, and turn-taking. To guarantee the reliability of the rating process, the scores of the pretest and posttest given by the three raters were compared, and inter-rater reliability

was computed. The results obtained from the two tests were .876 and .888 respectively and considered highly acceptable.

3.3.2.Language-in-Talk log assignment

The language-in-talk log assignment was integrated as a monitored self-study task in a conversation class over the course of one semester. Each week the participants chose and watched audiovisuals of English speakers' natural or near-natural conversations containing language actions, including greeting and introducing, leave-taking, expressing gratitude or showing appreciation, making a request, and offer. While performing the task, the participants were also required to fill out a worksheet asking them to specify the source of their listening materials, verbatim transcription, and write a summary of the conversation describing its main goal, setting, and the relationship between speakers. To complete the task, the students also needed to reflect on what they learned from the conversation concerning how a particular action was carried out through talk, what kind of language was used to get the action done, as well as how the use of the language was shaped by the interactional context. The participants were provided with feedback on their log assignments each week by the researchers.

3.3.3.Written interview

The researchers administered a written interview at the end of the course to understand the participants' attitudes toward the integration of language-in-talk log assignments in conversation class. The questions elicited the participants' reflection on the use of log assignments as a self-study task to improve conversation skills and the challenges and benefits of doing log assignments.

3.3.4. Procedures

The following sequential step-by-step procedure was implemented in this study:

i. Researchers obtained consent from the participants by making the purpose, procedure, and requirements of the study clear and letting them sign the informed consent form.

ii.   Researchers explained the structure of language-in-talk log assignments to the participants. The video tutorial with an explanation of the structure of language-in-talk log assignments was also uploaded by the researchers on Learning Management System (LMS2) for participants' reference.

iii. Participants performed the pretest role-play before they started log assignments in a single session.

iv.   Participants completed language-in-talk log assignments for ten actions specified in the handouts as a part of their self-study.

v.   Participants submitted weekly language-in-talk log assignments to the researchers.

vi.   Researchers scheduled consultation meetings via Zoom with the participants to clarify their doubts as and when required. The researchers mostly interacted with participants via Facebook Messenger and provided feedback on their log assignments through email on weekly basis.

vii. Participants performed posttest role-play after completing all the ten log assignments in a single session.

viii. Researchers provided a written interview questionnaire to the participants at the end of the course.

ix.   Finally, the scores of the pretest vs. posttest role-play were compared, and content analysis was performed to uncover the themes emerging from the participants' reflections on the use of language-in-talk log assignments.

4. Results

4.1. Improvement in Conversation Skills

Table 2

Performance Differences Before and After doing the Language-in-talk Log Assignments

Turns at Talk	Components	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention		t		df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect size
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.					
Turn Construction	Pronunciation	2.94	.55	3.95	.44	18.851	**	87	.000	2.040
	Fluency	2.89	.56	3.99	.51	18.967	**	87	.000	2.056
	Vocabulary	2.81	.49	3.81	.45	18.028	**	87	.000	2.128
	Grammatical Structure	2.69	.50	3.80	.42	18.622	**	87	.000	2.413
	Non-verbal Language	3.04	.51	4.14	.55	17.669	**	87	.000	2.076
Turn Delivery/allocation	Smooth turn delivery with natural pauses and fillers	2.86	.50	3.86	.51	16.933	**	87	.000	1.980
	Relevant responses to a previous turn	2.94	.47	4.04	.44	18.870	**	87	.000	2.418
Turn-taking	Adjacency Pair/Sequential Organization	2.89	.56	4.00	.48	16.876	**	87	.000	2.135
	Overall	20.13	4.33	31.59	3.55	24.053	**	87	.000	2.909

Remark ** :significant at 0.01 level

The paired-sample t-test suggested that the use of language-in-talk log assignments as part of monitored self-study tasks in a conversation course was effective in improving Thai EFL learners' conversation skills. After the intervention, the statistics revealed that the participants improved substantially in all of the components assessed. As shown in Table 2, the log assignments helped enhance their pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammatical structure, non-verbal language, turn delivery, and turn-taking with a significant degree of difference between pre-and post-test role-play scores at a level of 0.01 with remarkably large effect sizes. Overall, there was a significant difference in the participants' performance at 0.01 level (t= 24.0531, p= 0.00) with the Cohen's d effect size of 2.909. Although the mean scores of all the components increased, in particular, components such as relevant responses to a previous turn and adjacency pair saw a very significant rise in mean scores after the intervention ($\bar{x}$ = 4.04, $\bar{x}$ = 4.00 respectively) than those obtained before the intervention ($\bar{x}$ = 2.94, $\bar{x}$ = 2.89 respectively).

The written interview data revealed similar results. Eight recurring themes emerged and were further quantified to determine their distribution frequency. The data confirmed the potentiality of using language-in-talk log assignments as a learning tool in conversation class as the participants indicated improvement in all of the eight themes (see Figure 1). One of the aims of the language-in-talk log assignment was to expose students to naturally occurring conversation in real life and as hypothesized, 22% of the participants responded that they were exposed to different conversation contexts each week while doing the log assignments. Twelve percent reported that the log assignments helped expose them to natural conversation applicable to everyday social situations. The participants perceived weekly log assignments as an easy medium to explore various contexts of conversations in daily life. Some, for example, gave the following explanations in their written interview:

-*....it was able to give me a correct understanding of any conversation in different contexts.*

- I have gained knowledge of conversations on various topics.

-*The topics used in log assignments are diverse and practical in everyday life such as greetings, presentations, giving directions, and expressing opinions.*

Figure1

Frequency of Beneficial Areas Based on Written Interview Data
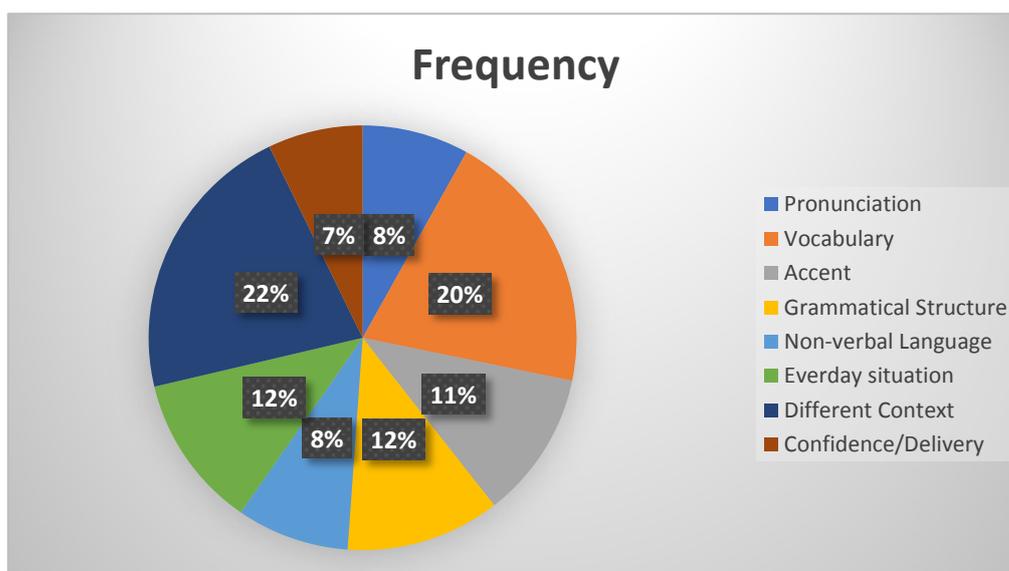
The findings further supported the result of the t-test, indicating significant improvement in all the components of turn-construction (see Table 2). Twenty percent of the participants reported having improved in vocabulary followed by 12 % in grammatical structure, 11% in accent, 8% in pronunciation, 8% in non-verbal language, and 7% in delivery respectively. Students wrote the following comments:

  - I have improved my speaking skills such as my accent and learned new vocabulary, phrases, and a new way of learning, in line with the COVID19 situation. It is an online learning experience and can be applied in daily life.

  - I have learned new vocabulary. Knowing more words made me more confident in using those words and more confident in speaking.

  - I can perceive a speaker's emotions or feelings through facial expressions as I have to pay a lot of attention to the tone of the speakers in the audio clips.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis of Language-in-Talk Log Assignments

Qualitative Analysis of Language-in-talk Log Assignments As CA is the analysis of real-world, situated, and contextualized talk, the data for studies must be actual talk occurring in actual contexts. Part 1 of the language-in-talk log assignment required learners to choose any online audiovisual materials containing natural or near-natural conversations in English to listen to or watch and practice. The use of actual instances of talk allowed the possibility of an examination of what English speakers actually do when speaking, rather than producing an account of what they think they should do. The participants' log assignments indicated that they were exposed to different audiovisual materials, such as YouTube videos, movies, sitcoms, animations, and TV shows while doing weekly log assignments over the period of ten weeks. This not only provided them with a platform for language acquisition through observable naturally occurring conversation but helped them to understand mechanisms of spoken language by examining what speakers actually do and orient to when they are using language.

  Part II required learners to transcribe the audiovisual materials they had watched using the CA transcription convention. The participants' log assignments showed that there was a significant improvement in using transcription symbols from the first to the final language-in-talk log assignment. In the first log assignment, the participants hardly used any transcription symbols, and there was moderate use of transcription symbols in the following log assignments. However,

towards the fourth log assignment, the participants' use of transcription symbols was robust and apparently more than in the initial log assignments. This improvement in the use of CA transcription symbols indicated that participants have improved their cognizance of features of conversation ranging from pauses, prosody, silence, cut-offs to units of structures that carry the functional significance of real-time talk with each log assignment.

After transcribing the video, the participants were also required to provide a brief summary of the conversation describing its main goal, setting, and the relationship between speakers. The log assignments suggested that the participants were exposed to conversations in both casual and formal settings, such as at the office, restaurant, apartment, university, travel agency, company, and social party with varied goals. In addition, the relationship between speakers also differed from one context to another, thereby exposing them to diverse relationships, for example, teacher-student, colleagues, friends, neighbors, strangers, interviewer-interviewee, and employer-employee. This indicated that log assignments aided them in exploring naturally occurring language in different settings and made them understand how the relationship between the speakers is established and maintained in different conversation contexts.

Finally, to complete the task, Part III required the participants to reflect on what they learned from the conversation concerning how a particular action is carried out through talk, what kind of language is used to get the action done, and how the use of the language is shaped by the interactional context. Across the 10 language-in-talk log assignments, participants were able to identify features of spoken language such as low lexico-syntactic density (i.e. shorter phrases and fragments), honorific forms, discourse markers, hedges, fillers, repetitions, interjections, and attention-getters. As they dissected the conversation into specific features, they were also able to identify the formal and informal context of the conversation and differentiate the use of language depending on the degree of formality of interaction. The following table represents the repetitive features and examples of spoken language identified by the participants in their language-in-talk log assignment:

Table 3

- talk Log Assignment-in-LanguageGreeting and Introducing Someone

Low lexico–syntactic density	Discourse marker	Hedging language	Filler	Repetition	Interjection	Attention Getter
I'm –I'm fine **Who's** – Who's your friend? **You're**– You're not that handsome but you look okay **Here's**– Here's some menus.	**Well**–Well, it's nice to meet you	–**Would you mind** if I …	**Uh …** I'll call you tomorrow **Um…**I'll have coffee please **Ummm…**I like my coffee black.	–Yeah, please please, please this is yours. –Thank you ! Thank you so much! – It is, it is… – Of course, of course…	–Oh! WOW! That's great ! Oh, My God ! Whoa!	Excuse me ! Hey!

4.3. Close Analysis of Pretest and Posttest Role-plays

The pre-and post-test role-plays were closely examined to verify the statistical findings of the students' improvement in conversational abilities and to get an in-depth insight into their use of language in interaction before and after the intervention. Showing pretest and posttest role-plays of two pairs performing social actions such as making an invitation and expressing or showing gratitude, the talk excerpts below reveal the students' substantial performance improvement.

Excerpts 1 and 2 illustrate a pair, Kim (a pseudonym) and Joy (a pseudonym) making an invitation, and the close analysis of their pretest and posttest role-plays revealed noticeable differences between the two. In Excerpt 1, although the conversation opens well with the classic use of the greeting adjacency pair, the conversation is incessantly interrupted with fillers, pauses, long silences, and cut-offs causing communication breakdown (e.g., line 04 to line 06). After the initial greeting, usually, the inquiry, such as line 03 >long time no see you< is followed by an answer, but in this case, Kim fails to respond and moves directly to the next

turn, indicating her inability to construct a meaningful turn at talk. There is a major communication breakdown in lines 04 to 06, rendering Kim's initial attempt to make an invitation unsuccessful. In this interaction, 0.8-second silence here indicates that Kim is having a problem in carrying out the conversation further. The conversation also has grammatical errors and unintelligible speech as some words are left unuttered and some are barely intelligible (e.g., line 08 to line 17). Despite all these discrepancies, the pair however managed to conduct the social action. Kim's invitation to the lunch was accepted instantly by Joy, choosing the preferred social action (invitation-acceptance) albeit her busy schedule.

Excerpt 1- Making an Invitation (Pretest role-play- 57 sec)

01   Kim: Hello P2 ((waves))

02   Joy: Hi P1=

03   >long time no see you< ((waves back))

04   Kim: uhmm, uhmmm

05   Joy (.) you are free (0.5) –

06   (0.8) ((communication breakdown, apologizes to the teacher, and continues the conversation)).

07   Kim: Are:you::free::to::have:::lunch with me.

08   Joy: Oh no! I am have study,

09   I am have test in the class.

10   Kim: uhm

11   (.5)

12   Are you ten minutes please.

13   Joy: uhm (.) okay↓=

14   Where will (.) where will (unintelligible speech) go to have lunch.

15   Kim: uhm elephant canteen.

16   Joy: Uhm $okay$=

17   Is there (unintelligible speech)

18   Kim: Yeah. Yeah. ↑Okay, let's go my friends.

19   Joy: Okay.

Compared to the pretest role-play, the conversation in the posttest role-play is more spontaneous as the transition from speaker to speaker occurs fluidly with few gaps, fillers, pauses, and cut-offs. The turns are coherent and logically sequenced to achieve the target social action. For instance, in the opening, unlike the pretest role-play, the speakers do not just use the greeting adjacency pair but expand the sequence by adding an exchange concerning their well-being like in line 03 "How are you doing?". Kim further initiates the invitation sequence by using hedging in line 7 to invite Joy to lunch. By doing so she mitigates the interaction by not sounding too persuasive like in the pretest role-play. Joy in turn declines the invitation by giving an excuse. Joy's turn in line 8 starts with a filler 'uhm' which is not an interruption but indicates the possibility of refusing the invitation. In the pretest role-play, despite her busy schedule Joy accepted the invitation, but in the posttest role-play, she is able to decline the invitation without offending Kim.

Further, Kim keeps the conversation going by inserting an expansion in line 13 "What about tonight" an alternative precursor to an invitation. Joy finally accepts the invitation in line 17, and before that, her turn in line 16, an insert expansion, allows her to indirectly accept the invitation, i.e., pre-acceptance, while confirming her availability. Moreover, the speakers end the conversation by deciding on the venue for dinner and terminate the interaction by exchanging goodbyes instead of ending it abruptly as in the pretest role-play. The fact that the pair was able to conduct both preferred actions (invitation-acceptance) and dispreferred action (invitation-decline) in the posttest role-play with an opening (greeting), centering (making an invitation) and closing sequence (leave-taking) apparently proved their improvement in conversation abilities.

Excerpt 2- Making an Invitation (Posttest role-play- 1 min:11 sec)

01   Kim: ↑Hello P2   ((Opening sequence))

02   Joy: Hi P1.

((waving at each other))

03   Kim: How are you doing? ((Inquiry, question about well-being))

04   Joy: I am (unintelligible speech)=

05   How about you.

06   Kim: I am very well.

07   Shall we go, have lunch together. ((Invitation FPP))

08   Joy: uhm sorry, ((Insert Expansion-Pre-decline))

09   I will see (.)

10   I have test in the class =

11   I have test ((unintelligible speech)) subjects.

12   Kim: oh↓ That's why=

13   What about tonight. ((Insert Expansion FPP))

14   Joy: uhm (.)

15   Yes, I think I can=

16   Tonight, I have no plan. ((Insert Expansion-Pre-acceptance))

17   Kim: Let me (unintelligible speech), Okay.

18   Joy: ↑okay= ((Acceptance SPP))

19   Where we going to have dinner?

20   Kim: uhm (.5)

((Suggested a restaurant, the name of the restaurant was incomprehensible))

21   Joy: Sorry, I cannot go there.

22   Shall we go to Bhurapashat?

23   Kim: Where is Bhurapashat?

24   Joy: Uhm (.) it is opposite to PSU-school=

25   You can start at the Faculty of Natural Resources and you go straight to the left

Nakhanon =

26   And go straight and it will be on your right.

27   Kim: ↑Oh! Okay.

28    $ See you, bye bye. $

29   Joy: See you, bye.

Excerpts 3 and 4 are the pre-and post-test role-plays of another pair engaging in expressing gratitude or showing appreciation in a hypothetical situation. The pretest role-play lasted only two minutes 22 seconds, attributable to speakers' inability to construct and take turns smoothly for a spontaneous and meaningful conversation. Both speakers, Pueng (a pseudonym) and Natcha (a pseudonym) struggle to get through their message to one another as the conversation is convoluted with unnecessary long pauses, fillers, repetition, and unintelligible speech (e.g., line 03, 05). Although both speakers try to repair the problems arising at their turns, they fail to repair them causing further communication breakdown. For instance, in lines 22-30, Natcha is either trying to direct Pueng to the page number of the homework task or she is convincing Pueng that the homework task is simple. This particular interaction gets dragged and confusing so that Pueng in lines 32-34 is either responding in one word or long silence and asks Natcha to repeat the sentence. In lines 28-29, Natcha initiates a repair sequence (self-initiated repair) by repeating the phrase 'Exercise, simple'. This initiation is not repaired as it is followed by a filler 'uhm' (line 32) and a pause (.) (line 33) as a response from Pueng, indicating her failure to provide an uptake.

Excerpt 3- Expressing gratitude or appreciation (Pretest role-play-2 mins: 22 secs)

01   Pueng: Hello, Natcha.

02   Natcha: Hi, Pueng.

03   Pueng: uhm, uhm, uhm (.)

04   Yesterday I am sick (.)

05   Can you help me ↑= what is the ((unintelligible speech)) in yesterday?

06   Natcha: Yes!

07   Ahh (.5) have to do exercise in uhm, uhm (.) –

08   Page 3.

09   Pueng: Oh↓

10   Uhm (.5)

11   Can I borrow your notebook for copy.

12   Uhm (.) how teacher said in our class.

13   Natcha: uhm, yes↑

14   Ahh, ahh, I, I, I –

15   (.5) ((communication breakdown, searching for words and using non-verbal languages))

16   Ahh, I give her tomorrow.

17   Pueng: Yes↓

18   Uhm, thank you

19   (.5)

20   Thank you, uhm, thank you for your notebook=

21   And (unintelligible speech) with me.

22   Natch: Uhm, can see a exercise on the page 2.

23   Pueng: 2? Okay.

24   (.5)

25   Again please.

26   Natcha: Uhm, uhm, can see a exercise on page 2.

27   (.8)

28   Natcha: Exercise, simple =

29   Exercise, simple.

30   Can see a exercise on the page 2.

31   (.5)

32   Pueng: Uhm

33   (.)

34   Okay (.)

35   See you, uhm (.)

36   See you tomorrow.

37   Natcha: Okay.

38   See you, tomorrow.

In the posttest role-play, the conversation is succinct, better organized, and orderly. The pair was able to perform the social action efficiently in short duration with meaningful turn constructions, turn taking, and adjacency pair. Unlike the pretest role-play, the posttest role-play had variations in speakers' intonation and mood. Both of the speakers greet each other with excitement and use intonation (e.g., line 09), and emphasize the speech wherever appropriate (e.g., line 03). The turns at talk are spontaneous as a greeting is followed by another greeting (line 01 and 02), a farewell by a farewell (line 16-18), and a question by an answer (e.g., line 3 and 4).

Excerpt 4- Expressing gratitude or appreciation (Posttest role-play-38 sec)

01   Pueng: Hi

02   Natcha: Hi

03   How are you?

      ((waving at each other))

04   Pueng: I have a fever.

05   Natcha: I hope you will be better.

06   Pueng: Thanks=

07   But I did not take (.) take class last week.

08   ↑So, can I borrow your notebook?

09   Natcha: ↑Sure.

10   I will bring (.) it to you tomorrow.

11   Pueng: Thank you=

12    $Thank you so much$

133

((bow her head))

13   Natch: Okay.

14   I hope you uhm get (.2) well soon.

15   Pueng: Thank you again.

16   See you.

17   Natcha: See you, bye

18   Pueng: [bye, bye]

5. Discussion

The current study aimed to evaluate the effect of using CA-informed language-in-talk log assignments in improving the conversation skills of Thai EFL learners. Firstly, the findings supported and strengthened the conclusion arrived at in earlier studies conducted in the Thai EFL context that the integration of CA in conversation lessons can help students improve their overall conversational performance (Sinwongsuwat et al., 2018; Sitthikoson & Sinwongsuwat, 2017; Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015; Waedaoh, & Sinwongsuwat, 2018). Indeed, the significant improvement in the participants' conversation abilities after doing the log assignment added value to the prospective use of online audiovisual materials in conversation classes to expose students to authentic language input. The statistical results showed a significant effect of log assignments on the participants' posttest role-play scores after being exposed to video clips of their choice and completing the weekly log assignment worksheets for ten weeks. Evidently, with the visual, audio, and written elements from the videos, they were able to identify and improve in such conversational aspects as pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammatical structure, non-verbal language, turn delivery, and overall turn-taking. The close analysis of pre-and post-test role-plays corroborated the statistical findings and supported several studies stressing the value of audiovisuals embedded in the combination of image, sound, and text (in the form of subtitles). Talaván (2007), as cited in Frumuselu et al. (2015), argued that audiovisuals amalgamating visual and verbal conversations of people can effectively complement language teaching.

Secondly, the results from the language-in-talk log assignment further

reinforced the potential of using a log assignment as a pedagogical tool in conversation classes. The log assignment gave the participants a favorable medium to explore colloquial English in real-life contexts rather than hypothetical situations, thereby exposing them to a wide range of native speakers and conversation contexts with diverse features of spoken language, such as various regional accents, reduced forms of speech, slang, and dialectal vocabulary. The log assignments showed that the participants were exposed to a plethora of vocabulary related to social action every week, and 20% also reported having improved their vocabulary after doing log assignments in their written interview. According to Gass (1999), vocabulary acquisition can occur through either intentional or incidental learning. The former is formal as the acquisition of vocabulary is the prime focus; however, the latter is the by-product of an activity, usually involving comprehension, not specifically designed for vocabulary learning (as cited in Rodgers, 2013). With a large amount of authentic input provided by audiovisuals (Rodger, 2013), log assignments enabled incidental learning among the participants as they received a large amount of language input, which not only held their attention for longer periods but also provided repeated encounters for over 10 weeks. This might have helped the participants immensely with their construction of turns at talk as the turns are organized syntactically, prosodically, and pragmatically (Liddicoat, 2007).

Lastly, a noteworthy result of this study was the improvement in the participants' use of transcription symbols from the initial to the final language-in-talk log assignment. The basic data for conversation analysis is naturally occurring talk which is recorded and transcribed for close analysis (Liddicoat, 2007). As the participants watched and transcribed audiovisuals containing social action each week, their significant progress in the use of transcription from none in the first log assignment to robust use of symbols in the last assignment indicated that they became more aware of the importance of small details of the conversation. This included intonation, stress, fillers, the loudness of words, overlaps, and other verbal and nonverbal features (Sinwongsuwat, 2018). The log assignments provided them with an opportunity to improve their language-noticing as transcription allowed them to diligently capture all the facets of speech ranging from pauses, prosody, to units of structure that carry functional significance in an ongoing talk-in-interaction. The role-play mean scores showed that the participants achieved increased mean scores in the posttest role-play in

pronunciation and nonverbal language with a significant difference at 0.01 level. In addition, the written interview data also indicated that 8% of the participants improved their pronunciation and 8% in using and deciphering non-verbal languages in a conversation. These improvements could be attributable to Part II of the language-in-talk log assignment where participants need to transcribe the video they watched weekly.

6. Limitations of the Study

Despite the favorable results reported in this study, certain limitations need to be dealt with in further studies. As the study employed a one-group pretest-posttest quasi-experiment design, all the participants were considered an experimental group receiving the same treatment. Therefore, having a control group might have offered a wider perspective on the effectiveness of using language-in-talk log assignments and help in addressing such confounding variables as the instructor's teaching, which undeniably affected the participants' conversation learning. This confounding variable was nevertheless controlled to some extent by selecting two sections of students taught by the same instructor not trained in CA-informed teaching pedagogy. The participants, therefore, did not receive any explicit instruction on applying CA principles and concepts in learning L2 conversations. The teaching materials neither explicitly marked any features of conversation, turn-taking, and sequential organization of conversation, nor included the CA transcription convention used. Along with the orientation to the structure of the language-in-talk log assignment, the participants were only introduced to basic features of spoken language and given a handout with transcription symbols and definitions for their reference by the researcher.

7. Conclusion

The language-in-talk log assignment was successfully integrated as a monitored self-study task in a conversation course to improve the conversation skills of Thai EFL learners. Both quantitative and qualitative results confirmed the effectiveness of the log assignments, showing significant improvement in the participants' conversation skills in all the aspects examined including pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammatical structure, non-verbal language, turn delivery, and turn-taking. The qualitative findings and close analysis of pre-and post-test role-plays

particularly revealed that the students became more cognizant of grammar in conversation, the sequential organization of talk-in-interaction, the function of verbal and nonverbal languages, and the importance of context in the form of social categories, social relationships, and institutional and cultural settings in a conversation. Given the robust evidence of positive results, it is therefore recommended that the language-in-talk log assignment be amalgamated into existing conversation lessons and made an integral part of CA-informed conversation teaching.

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