Constructing Shared Knowledge in Academic Group Interaction: Emergent Common Grounding in Intercultural and ELF Discourse

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Introduction

In intercultural discourse, interlocutors often face difficulties in interpreting how the context expects them to perform and in constructing common knowledge. In order to overcome these difficulties, they need to negotiate meanings based on the sense of each individual participant. This article focuses on "common grounding" (e.g., Kecskes, 2014) as it appeared in a group discussion among university students during an academic interaction. Analyzing the author's data as a part of "linguistic ethnography" (e.g., Shaw, Copland & Snell, 2015), the study explores interaction among a group that consisted of several Asian students and one American student, who used English as a lingua franca (hereafter, ELF) (e.g., Seidlhofer, 2011; Kecskes, 2019); in addition, English was the target language for second-language acquisition for the Asian students. While being academically socialized ("academic discourse socialization", Duff, 2010) into the context of a global education program, the students participated in interaction through a process where common grounding was established. From the perspective of "emergent common ground" (Kecskes, 2014), the study thus examines how this common grounding emerged through the use of ELF.

Background

We need knowledge shared to understand each other and interpret

interaction. This knowledge, "common ground" (Clark, 1996) supports us in negotiation contexts where we experience linguistic and communicative difficulties. According to Kecskes and Zhang (2009), each interlocutor has their own knowledge based on their past experience and they act in accordance with it, which tends to cause mutual misunderstanding in the first phase of intercultural communication. Kecskes and Zhang (2009) state that "Their [interlocutors'] egocentric behavior is rooted in the speakers' or hearers' more reliance on their own knowledge instead of mutual knowledge" (p. 332). In this way, we unintentionally tend to perform based on our own knowledge, experience, and interpretation of the contextual elements and goals, in other words, egocentrically. On the other hand, we also cooperate with other interlocutors to act jointly. Kescckes and Zhang (2009), combining social and cognitive perspective, state that "the pragmatic view posits cooperation as the main driving force of communication, while the cognitive view considers egocentrism as central in communication (p. 338).

In order to cooperate, speakers should have shared knowledge on which they rely to understand each other's intentions. Keckses (2008) presents "the framework of the dynamic model of meaning (DMM)", which defines two types of common ground, core common ground and emergent common ground, as follows:

> …two components of common ground are identified: core common ground, which is composed of common sense, cultural sense, and formal sense, and mainly derives from the interlocutors' shared knowledge of prior experience, and emergent common ground, which is composed of shared sense and current sense, and mainly derives from the interlocutors' individual knowledge of prior and/or current experience that is pertinent to the current situation…
>
> (Kecskes and Zhang, 2009, p. 333)

Emergent common ground in intercultural communication appears as "on site" production. As mentioned earlier, competence to construct discourse is generally acquired through socialization, and in particular, where interlocutors use their first language in the first cultural context (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). However, in intercultural communication, interlocutors who lack shared knowledge often construct it through common grounding.

ELF speakers and hearers use their common linguistic repertoire (English) to deliver their interpretation and negotiate meanings when taking part in discourse. In intercultural communication, speakers and hearers first try to communicate by relying mainly on their own prior knowledge. The speakers convey their ideas by choosing simple expressions from their collections of English elements (Kecskes, 2007).

When university students take courses oriented toward global and intercultural education, they encounter sociocultural and contextual unfamiliarity. The students in these cases are socialized into academic discourse where they are encouraged to learn and use English as a lingua franca as well as to acquire "intercultural communicative competence" (e.g., Byram, 1997). In thinking about global education programs, we need to understand, "How do newcomers to an academic culture learn how to participate successfully in the oral and written discourse and related practices of that discourse community? How are they socialized, explicitly or implicitly, into these local discursive practices?" (Duff, 2010, p. 169). More specifically, in relation to second language learning, we need to consider "the social, cognitive, and cultural processes, ideologies, and practices involved in higher education in particular" (Kobayashi, Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2017, p. 239).

Methodology

As globalization proceeds, many universities in Japan have established a course aiming to educate students to have a global sensitivity. A key characteristic of such courses is that not only Japanese students but also foreign students are involved in the educational program. The students are encouraged to share knowledge and negotiate in classrooms. In this learning situation, the students must practice using of English as a common language, as well as learning it as a target language if they are not native speakers of English. In addition to language use, they also encounter the need to develop "intercultural communicative competence" (e.g., Byram, 1997), which is competence to learn to understand and cooperate with interlocutors in this kind of situation.

The data for the preset study are from the author's linguistic ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2014, which focused on university students' socialization in the process of acquisition of English and intercultural communication. In this fieldwork, the author engaged in "participation observation" (Blommaert & Jie, 2010) by being a course assistant as well as an observer of the course. As an assistant of the course, the author was able to observe the course members' behaviors from an insider point of view ("emic approach", Duranti, 1997). Over 15 weeks, events in the course were audio- and video-recorded. The author found interesting events in the data allowed him to develop a "topic-oriented" approach (Hymes, 1996) to look in more detail at the events. In accordance with the framework of linguistic ethnography, the present study regards language use as "communicative action functioning in social contexts in ongoing routines of peoples' daily lives" (Copland & Creese, 2015, p. 27), while examining how ELF users' common ground emerges in academic interactions.

The present paper discusses four excerpts of spoken data, while also showing visual data of the most advanced group clipped from video recordings. The group consisted of four students: one American student, one Japanese student, and two Asian students (Table 1). Andrew, a student from the US, worked with this group as a facilitator of their English interactions. He was a native speaker of English, and although he was not trained to teach English professionally, he did show some instructional behavior with the group but was not trained to teach English professionally. The Japanese student, Ozora was a student at the university where the class was held, and studied English-Japanese translation. At that time, as he was planning to study abroad, he participated actively in every class and in the group discussion. This group had two students from Asian countries, Rachmad and Khwan (pseudonym). Rachmad was from Indonesia, and he had majored in Japanese language and culture in his home university. He was fluent in Japanese language, and as Japanese was part of the group's common linguistic repertoire, he would sometimes use it to overcome linguistic difficulties in developing the group idea (Nukuto, 2018). Khwan was from Thailand, and also studied Japanese language and culture.

Table 1. The group members

Name	Nationality	F/M	Resources (L1/L2)	Major
Andrew (Group Assistant)	American	M	English/Japanese	Anthropology
Ozora	Japanese	M	Japanese/English	Translation (English and Japanese)
Rachmad	Indonesian	M	Indonesian/English, Japanese	Japanese language and culture
Khwan (pseudonym)	Thai	F	Thai/English, Japanese	Japanese language and culture

The spoken data in the present case study is "lingua franca data" (e.g., Firth, 1996; Kaur, 2020), characterized by successful interaction and the use of correct English expressions but also a lack of commonality in linguistic and communicative competence as shared background knowledge. As Kaur (2020) notes, analyzing and interpreting the events are sometimes difficult due to "the diversity in participants' linguacultural backgrounds and language competence" (p. 163).

This article analyzes four extracts as examples of emergent common ground appearing in ELF interaction. These extracts include ELF characteristics, such as grammatical aspects that would be considered incorrect by native speakers. Even though the interactions lacked native-like English aspects as well as certain aspects of competence and knowledge, the students were able to complete the sequences intersubjectively through common grounding.

Data Analysis

Example 1 describes a group discussion whose theme is "what will you do if you get a million dollars?". First, it should be noted that this day is the third class of the total of 15 weekly classes in the course, which follows an orientation day and a group placement test. That is, this is the first day for the group to discuss topics. The students are suggesting ideas about what they want to use a million dollars for. There is one mini white-board in a group to summarize and visualize their suggestions. Example 1 starts at the point when they are trying to come up with ideas, and Andrew is encouraging the members to suggest them.

Example 1 (April 25th)
1. Ozora: Mmm... ((Writing down his idea on the mini-board))

2. Andrew: Anything else:: out of idea::s. Yes, Go:::to:::

3. Khwan: Gigs. ((Just reading the word on the board, not her statement))

4. Rachmad: Gigs. ((Just repeating Khwan's utterance above))

5. Ozora: Gig ↓

6. Andrew: Gigs ↑ Gig, Gig ↑ Like a, like a::: like fans at a concert ↑

7. Ozora: Yeah ↓ Yeah, Yeah ↓

8. Andrew: OK, so, go to a concert ↓

9. Ozora: Ah, a lot of (⋯)

10. Andrew: Gigs is fi:::ne ↓ But it's it's it, might be a little bit confusing,

11.   If you just say, go to a gi, go to a gi:::g ↓ But, OK ↓

12. Rachmad: Go to a concert ↓

13. Andrew: Go to a concert, Yeah ↓

After Andrew encouraged the members to suggest their ideas (2), Khwan implies that she would use the money for "gigs" (3). Responding to this, Rachmad repeats "gigs" to keep the ideas on track (4). Ozora is also showing his interest in the idea, but this single word interaction (2-5) is not completed as it is uncertain that all members share the knowledge of the expression "gigs". The ambiguity of this expression is the focus of Andrew's utterance (6). He is asking about what the members were implying with the word, "gig". From his utterance, "Like a, like a::: like fans at a concert ↑ ", it can be supposed that the members lacked a core for common ground, in this case the meaning of gig. In (7), Ozora responds to Andrew's attempt to clarify the meaning of the word. Once there, with Ozora's response, Andrew has concluded the negotiation of the meaning of "gigs" while Ozora is adding another meaning element to "gigs", "Ah, a lot of (⋯)", which encourages the other members to share their interpretations (8-9). Ozora expresses his interpretation of the meaning of "gigs", which

he thinks means a lot of performances by rock bands, while Andrew is continuing to suggest that "gigs" is not so proper in this context (10-11). Although the construction of common ground seems to be still in progress through Ozora's and Andrew's utterances, Andrew concludes this interaction by "letting it pass" (Firth, 1996) and making sense of it only in the context of Line 11, "But, OK ↓ ". Following this, Rachmad shows his understanding and Andrew closes the interaction by confirming (12-13). By the group members discussing the meaning of one English word, and negotiating the meaning of it, common ground emerges such that they can complete the discussion.

In Example 2, the students are starting to review their understanding of a scene from the movie, "Patch Adams". They have been given a handout with some items related to the contents of the scene. Here, as usual, Andrew opens a group discussion.

Example 2 (May 23rd)

14. Andrew: So, what's the question?
15.   How do you guys like the movie so far?
16. Rachmad: xxxxx
17. Andrew: OK
18. Rachmad: OK, So ↓ , fir:::st, ah::: section ↑
19. Andrew: uh-huh ↑
20. Rachmad: From, beginning to, sixteen minutes ↑
21. Andrew: Yes ↓
22. Rachmad: Especially, nothing certificate ↓ So ↓ xxxxxx I catched all of
                        them ↓
23. Andrew: You caught all of them ↑ Mad ↑ ((Andrew calls Rachmad
                        "Mad")) ↑
24. Rachmad: I caught.

25. Andrew: You caught all of them ↑
26. Ozora: Yeah ↓
27. Andrew: Caught all of them ↑ Yes ↑ You check them off! Especially
                you checked off
28.   when you heard!
29. Khwan: hahaha
30. Andrew: ha:::

This interaction starts with Andrew and Rachmad's dialogue about what they thought about the scene (14-17). In Line 16 it was impossible to transcribe what was uttered because of the surrounding noise. However, considering the line that follows, it is inferred that Rachmad's feedback was recognized and accepted as a topic in the group discussion. By Line 18, Rachmad is holding the floor and managing the point that they will discuss; he stars with a discourse marker, "so", and then add more detail. He focuses the members' attention on the scene from its beginning to sixteen minutes (20). Though he gets feedback which allows him to keep talking, Rachmad is unable to make a conclusive statement. This is evident in Andrew's repetitive feedback (23, 25, 27) in which he tries to confirm whether Rachmad was actually able to check off all of the items about the scene content. Image 1 describes Line 25 and 26, when Andrew asks Ozora whether he has checked off all the items by gazing at him to confirm. Usually, if there is no failure in the process of interaction, Andrew does not act like this and keeps facilitating the discussion. In Image 2, Andrew checks the other two members' understanding by looking at them. Andrew's actions enable the group discussion to continue by encouraging the members to recall what they marked on the handout.

Image 1. Looking at Ozora

Image 2. Looking at Khwan and Rachmad

During this negotiation, in it becomes clear that they had not actually checked off all the necessary items, and moreover, Andrew corrects Rachmad's grammatical mistake, "catched" (22) to "caught" (23). Despite the shortage of common linguistic and sociocultural knowledge among the speakers as often exposed by ELF data, the present case shows how common ground can merge in the process of group negotiation and

construction of discourse.

The shortage of shared knowledge leads to a gap in the contextual understanding between native and non-native speakers of English. Example 3 is from early in the course, the class on May 23th, when the members were still adapting themselves to the group. For example, in Lines 33-36, Ozora seems not to completely understand how to answer. One would think that he would state his idea and then a reason for it, which is the discourse pattern expected of the group. However, he is unable to give a reason.

Example 3 is a continuation of the interaction in Example 2, where the members were instructed to check the outline of the movie scene again.

Example 3 (May 23th)

31. Andrew:	Alright, so ↓ first, how did he get his name ↑
32. Students:	((thinking ideas))
33. Andrew:	You don't know ↑ You know ↑
34. Ozora:	The::: old man named···named, him ↓
35. Andrew:	Yes, exactly ↓
36. Ozora:	But I don't know wh:::y ↓ ((laughing))
37. Andrew:	You don't know wh:::y ↑ Alright, so ↓ , the cup is leaking, right ↑
38. Rachmad:	Uh huh ↑
39. Andrew:	Yes ↓ So::: when you have a leak, now, we say in English, if you, if you:::
40.	plug the leak ↓ , you patch it ↓ You patch the leak ↑
41. Rachmad:	Ah::: ((He has understood the answer))
42. Andrew:	So, say, ah::: you know one, you water. you have the holes. And say there is
43.	a::: there is a break in it.

44. Rachmad: Uh-huh ↑
45. Andrew: There is a hole.
46. Rachmad: Uh-huh ↑
47. Andrew: You would patch the hole.
48. Khwan: Ah::
49. Andrew: So, patching is when you:::when there is water leaking or liquid is leaking,
50.   and then you cover it.
51. Khwan: Ah:::
52. Andrew: So, when you cover the little hole, he PATCHED it.
53. Khwan: Ah:::
54. Andrew: So.
55. Ozora: Ah:::
56. Rachmad: From that...
57. Andrew: So, that's why he got that nickname, Patch. yes, Mm, OK.

Here, Andrew is the one managing the interaction, and who understands the context of the movie scene (31). Ozora responds to Andrew's initiation, "You don't know ↑ You know ↑ " (33) by describing the scene where the old man named the main character Patch. But although the point is accepted by Andrew, Ozora was unable to explain a reason. Following this sequence (34-36), in Line 37 Andrew shifts the focus to the cup leaking, in order to make sure that they will be able to complete the interaction. In addition, he expands on Ozora's idea by explaining the reason. In Line 39, after Rachmad's feedback (38), Andrew starts describing a situation when the English word, "leak" would be used (39). This sets the stage for the three class members to constructing common ground necessary to understand why the main character is named Patch. This type of common ground, as seen in the current context, is a

characteristic of ELF discourse. Non-linguistic elements may also help speakers understand the context and build shared knowledge, but the emergent common grounding can be seen in contexts where the members share linguistic knowledge necessary to continue into the next phase of the interaction.

Continuing with the interaction, from Line 37, the members focus on the situation where the cup is leaking, with Andrew explaining the meaning of "leak". In Line 39, he gives the example of a hole in a cup. Andrew's one-way constructing of knowledge here promotes common grounding around the keyword. Corresponding to this, we can see Rachmad's acknowledgement feedback (41, 44). In Line 45, Andrew shifts from the word "leaking" to "patching". When he makes the utterance, "You would patch the hole", Khwan seems to get the point saying "Ah:::" (48). Her understanding has come slightly later than Rachmad's, but at this point, the whole group appears to be reaching common grounding. Paying attention to the members' understanding, Andrew concludes his explanation by using a discourse marker, "so" and going back to the scene from the movie (49, 50, 52, 57). By Line 55, Ozora has finally understood the context. Corresponding to this, Rachmad also shows his understanding of the reason why the main character is named Patch.

This sequence shows how non-native speakers of English need not only to understand the context of the scene but also to have linguistic knowledge sufficient to read the context. As also seen in the other examples, Andrew is able to fill the gap between himself and the other three members of the group, and hence promote emergent common grounding.

Example 4 is from the data of July 11th, by which time the members were accustomed to the situation where English was used as a lingua franca and where they were all taking part in constructing the knowledge

while overcoming linguistic and communicative difficulties. This week, they worked on describing a picture hidden from one member (Andrew). Using English, other members (Khwan and Ozora) told Andrew about the picture.

Example 4 (July 11th)

58. Andrew: OK::: What is he wearing ↑ What does he look like ↑
59. Khwan: Long::: xxx
60. Andrew: Ah, a long shirt ↑ A long sleeved shirt ↑
61. Ozora: I think it is xxx
62. Khwan: xxx
63. Ozora: Ah::: line (…)
64. Andrew: Stripe ↑
65. Ozora: Not stripe, xxx like (...)
66. Khwan: Triangle ↓
67. Andrew: Mm ↑
68. Khwan: Triangle ↓
69. Ozora: Looks like, looks like many "W" ↓
70. Khwan: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah ↓
71. Ozora: Many "W" ↓ "W", "W" ↓
72. Andrew: Where ↑ Where does it look like that ↑ Oh:::it's like (…)
73. Ozora: His long (…) his long T-shirt (…)
74. Andrew: It's a long sleeved T-shir:::t ↑
75. Ozora: Long, long sleeved T-shirt, yeah ↓
76. Andrew: OK, OK ↓

Although Andrew starts the group discussion as usual, the other two members take a lot of turns on this day (Rachmad is absent). Compared with the other three examples, Khwan and Ozora frequently hold the floor

in the Example 4 interaction, not only because it is almost the end of the semester but also because they share the information about the picture as common ground between them. Responding to Andrew's question, "OK::: What is he wearing ↑ What does he look like ↑ " (58), Khwan focuses on a piece of clothing which a figure wears in the picture, that is, a long-sleeved shirt (59). Andrew asks her to confirm whether the shirt is long-length or has long sleeves. To this, Ozora gives his interpretation of the shape of the shirt. After Khwan's response to this, they move on to the design of the shirt, and it is implied that there are lines on it (63). The two then cooperate to describe to Andrew the overall design, the pattern of lines, on the shirt. Andrew is guessing that the shirt has stripes on it, which is disconfirmed by Ozora (63-65). This exchange encourages Khwan to enter the discussion, and she states that it might be triangles (66). Here we see a negotiation among them about "Triangle or W". Image 3 depicts a moment when Khwan and Ozora are talking and exploring what the best description of the design would be.

Image 3. "Triangle or W?"

   Although Andrew plays a different role from the other two members, they all work on explaining the design of the shirt. In this exchange, Ozora finds the most appropriate expression to describe the design in Line 69 as, "Looks like, looks like many "W" ↓ ". Khwan totally agrees with this description. With this negotiation of the design of the shirt, their common ground regarding the W design is established. Andrew then keeps asking about the picture. In Line 72, He shifts the topic to the location of the W marks, but then skips over his own question (the end of Line 72). In Line 73, Ozora ignores Andrew's question because he is still talking about the shape of the shirt. Andrew then shifts from asking about the placement of "W" to confirming whether the shirt is one with long sleeves (74). Andrew's changes of focus here can be explained, as an example of "let it pass" (Firth, 1996) or because mutual understanding has already been achieved. Finally, Ozora completes the task of transmitting the picture information to Andrew by repeating "long-sleeved T-shirt".

   In the process of this common grounding, the group members implicitly learn the difference between the expressions, long shirt and long-sleeved T-shirt, while also negotiating their shared knowledge about what is drawn in the picture, as well as their linguistic knowledge. Example 4 also includes ELF contextual feature such as "let it pass".

Discussion

As the analysis of the four examples demonstrates, speakers encounter linguistic and communicative difficulties in intercultural communication. In particular, they may lack aspects of linguistic knowledge needed to contribute to their group activities in ELF. In the present study, the students negotiated these difficulties by sharing and constructing new linguistic knowledge as a main factor in emergent common grounding.

We need to establish common ground in order to avoid difficulties in carrying out activities. The present study has described cases where group members who lacked core common ground had to establish emergent common ground in order to complete discussions. In particular, because the Asian students were "being bilingual" or "becoming bilingual" (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015), their emergent common ground was established mainly by sharing English elements to make sense of the context. In the July class (Example 4), the Asian students were successful in developing their ideas and sharing them with Andrew. In that context, Andrew did not perform as a discussion facilitator of the interaction as usual. Rather, the members were able to carry out their interaction without any formal help from the facilitator.

In group contexts such as described in this paper, highly competent members who act as assistants, like Andrew, tend to work to facilitate common grounding. Such a facilitator would be a speaker who is familiar with the context or has knowledge close to the core common ground. As a native speaker of English, Andrew often worked to establish common grounding among the other members, by sharing the linguistic elements or contextual information necessary to complete the discussion. For instance, in Example 1, the students were negotiating the meaning of "gig". This showed that the core common ground necessary to interpret the word was lacking among them. Through the interaction, Andrew and other group members were able to fill the gap between themselves and Ozora, who knew the word only as used in the Japanese context to express "a band's concert". Another example showed how the linguistically competent member was able to modify and manage the flow of the discourse. That is, in Example 2, Rachmad tried to take control of the group interaction but was unable to clarify the topic. Andrew then took over the floor and managed to refocus the discussion toward the goal of the activity. Then

Andrew tried to confirm whether the difficulty that Rachmad had been having was also experienced by the other group members. In this way, they reached the common grounding necessary for focusing on one of the primary points of the discussion.

The present examples show how the students' use of ELF, as a necessary part of the group discussions, developed to some extent. For instance, in Example 3, Ozora was unable to express a clear reason in response to Andrew's citation, but at least he was able to state that he did not know the reason. This case shows how the student was able to help clarify the problem and restart the discourse, which contributed to an emergent common grounding.

In sum, the ELF context in these examples forced the students to negotiate not only the contextual but also linguistic difficulties by recognizing their mutual knowledge through emergent common grounding. This emergent common grounding was established not only by the most linguistically competent member (a native speaker of English) but also by the other members, whose linguistic competence had previously been developing without core common grounding.

Conclusion

This article has explored how university students may negotiate and establish common ground in an intercultural and ELF context. In ELF situations, speakers often lack aspects of linguistic and communicative competence, such that common grounding becomes necessary in order to overcome the situational difficulties. As a concluding statement, let us consider two future research questions. First, does the experience of emergent common grounding over time, such as through academic group work over 15 weeks, contribute to the development of participants' core

common ground for future contexts? In the case where interlocutors already shared common ground, for example, the one they have acquired through previous language socialization, they could be expected to economically interact with and understand each other (Enfield, 2013). Second, how do interlocutors' non-linguistic behaviors such as an eye contact facilitate their emergent common grounding and support their acquisition of linguistic and communicative competence? Assuming that the interlocutors share a context and situational knowledge, multimodal aspects of the interaction can support cooperation and contribute to the further creation of common ground.

Acknowledgements

Transcription Conventions (Adapted from Richards, 2003)

(…)	Short pause (less than 3 second)
Capital	Emphasis
↑	Rising intonation
↓	Falling intonation
!	Exclamatory utterance
xxx	Unable to transcribe
:::	Extended sound or syllable up to 2 second
…	Utterance is fading out
(( ))	Showing additional information

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