Simulations and second/foreign language learning: improving communication skills through simulations

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Simulations and Second / Foreign Language Learning:
Improving communication skills through simulations

by

Yeonhwan Lyu

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for
The Master of Arts in English

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Graduate School

The University of Toledo

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An Abstract of

Simulations and Second / Foreign Language Learning:
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Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the current trend of second/foreign language learning. CLT has contributed to moving the focus from the forms of language to communication. However, it only changes the context and contents of lessons, focusing still on teaching “language” rather than teaching how to communicate. Language exists only in our mental domain; it does not exist in the physical domain (Yngve, 1996). Thus, our focus should be on learning/teaching how to communicate in a target speech community. This research re-examines the general notion of CLT and comprehensible input within a real-world perspective based on Yngve’s (1996) theory of Hard Science Linguistics. The main discussion of this research is the use of simulations in classrooms concerning learning/teaching how to communicate in the target speech
community. Simulations can offer efficient and effective learning in the classrooms while providing naturalistic environments, which maximize the opportunities of creating real communication in EFL classrooms. The discussion presented here about simulations in language learning/teaching is based on Jones’ (1982) view. The research presented here explores the use of simulations in the classrooms with the aim of helping learners of EFL to improve their communicative ability.
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Last but certainly not least, I thank God, who knows and provides for my needs, who gives me strength and peace, and who makes it possible for me to carry on and complete the hard work.
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Chapter I

Introduction

My interest in communicative language learning/teaching comes from my personal experience of learning English. When I was in high school, where we were engaged in passive learning and instructed mostly about grammar rules for English; I lost interest in English, feeling it was just too hard for me. Even though I had a good understanding of English grammar, it did not help much. After I got into the university, I took a survival English class in a non-intensive institute. There, I found another way of learning English. I became interested in speaking in English to communicate with others. That was my real beginning of learning English.

It is hopeful that most second/foreign language teaching today does not only focus on massive memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules. It seems that people now believe learning language to communicate is more important than learning about the language. Recently, the categories and the contents of the TOFEL test, one of the most popular and reliable English tests for foreigners, have been changed by making an effort to test more communicative ability than before. Testing grammar is no longer part of the test and testing speaking ability has been added to the test. Also, testing each section of listening, speaking, reading, and writing separately has been replaced by more integrated tests of all skills. Now, the new test seems to focus more on evaluating communicative ability. It reflects the current trend and perceived needs of learning English as a
second/foreign language. As a result of the changed interest in second/foreign language learning/teaching, the method of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become more and more popular in language education. CLT is one approach for teaching foreign language through which the students learn how to communicate effectively (Szepiela, 2003, p. 5). CLT seems ideal for language teaching since its main focus is communication, not forms of language. According to Thompson (1992), CLT is designed for meaningful communication both in and out of the classroom so that the task and activities are authentic and simulate a real-world situation (cited in Szepiela, 2003, p. 9). If this were true, the CLT method would be the perfect way of teaching second/foreign languages.

I admit that CLT has contributed to moving the focus to communication from the forms of language, but it only changes the context and contents of lessons. The problem here is that people still focus on “language” itself, not directly on “people communicating.” If a person is doing what we usually think of “learning a language”, this means that s/he is learning how to engage in new communicative behaviors (Coleman, 2002b). Therefore, we need to go one step further to realize that the focus should be on learning how people communicate in the target community, not on learning language.

Another area of concern about current language learning/teaching is that it is hard to have many opportunities to create “real” communication in the classroom, especially in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) situation. As Kemp (2003) mentioned, a common trend discovered by people who have mastered a foreign language is that the most efficient and effective way of learning occurred while the person was actually immersed in the environment in which the target language is spoken. Unfortunately, this
is not the case in the vast majority of EFL classrooms. Learning how to communicate in
the target language by immersion in a natural environment seems ideal, but it is often
inefficient since learners pick it up slowly. Traditional classrooms may seem to provide
efficient learning since learners learn words and grammar quickly, but they do not make
learners speak or communicate effectively. However, through simulations, efficient
learning is possible, while a naturalistic environment still can be provided. Also,
situations are controlled in classrooms by teachers in simulations thus creating, not
merely free conversation, but directed conversation, which leads to more efficient and
effective learning. Through simulations, there is hope to provide the environment to
maximize the opportunities of creating real communication in EFL classrooms.

My first simulation experience was through teaching the FLOC (Farm Labor
Organizing Committee) ESL (English as a Second Language) class, which was an
internship for a required course towards my master’s degree. The class taught survival
English, and students got to experience what to do or what to say under certain situations
by taking part in simulations. There was not a great deal of verbal communication due to
limited students’ proficiency but I was surprised by the students’ ability to communicate.
My interest in simulation and language learning/teaching grew after I observed one of Dr.
Coleman’s composition classes at the University of Toledo, in which he used an aircraft
design simulation that he created. When observing students within the simulation, it was
like watching a reality show. Students were in a real world situation where they were
highly motivated to participate in the simulation. Most of all, they were communicating
all the time. There could not be a better way to get students to talk, which is hard to do in
many cases. Then I was convinced that simulations are the key to communicative language learning/teaching.

In order to integrate simulations in an EFL class properly, the investigation of simulations and language learning is necessary. The research presented here will explore the use of simulations in the classrooms with the aim of helping learners of EFL to improve their communicative ability. In Chapter II, backgrounds that are related to simulations will be presented. Communicative Language Teaching will be re-examined within a real-world perspective based on Yngve’s (1996) theory of Hard Science Linguistics. Also, comprehensible input will be examined since it is an essential part of what must be presented prior to a simulation activity. In addition, the overview of simulations in terms of Jones’s (1982) view will be presented along with a comparison with Yngve’s concept of role part in a linkage. In Chapter III, the merits of using simulations for language classes will be discussed. Then, in Chapter IV, I will show examples of how simulations can be actually used in an EFL class according to the levels of the students’ proficiency. Finally, concerns that we have to take account when doing simulations will be covered.
Chapter II
Background

1. A real-world perspective on Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach that is specifically focuses on the ability to communicate naturally and realistically as a response to the recognition of the current need to emphasize communication skills in instruction (Kemp, 2003, p. 7). The goal of CLT is for learners to achieve “communicative competence”, which includes not only grammatical competence but also sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1997, cited in Chan, 1999, pp. 11-12). CLT emphasizes the learning and using of a target language in a meaningful context (Savignon, 1993, cited in Chan, 1999, p. 11), meaning its focus is on communication. There is no doubt that the ultimate goal of learning a language is to be able to communicate in the target language. CLT concerns the meaningful use of language in a context, and it has moved the focus from explicit grammar and the language to expression and comprehension of meaning.

However, in doing so CLT only changes the subjects and contents of the lessons, staying still within the domain of language. Even though CLT claims that the focus is on communication, it still starts from the point of teaching language rather than teaching how to communicate. There is no language or grammar in the real world. In fact, they exist only in our subjective experience and are not real-world entities (Coleman, 2002 a;
Yngve, 1996; Saussure, 1959). As Yngve (2004, p. 17) says, people should be the objects of study from the point of view of how they communicate. Therefore, the focus should be on learning how people communicate in a target speech community.

Since language itself has always been the focus in language learning, it seems that it is hard to get out of the box called “grammar”, the forms of a language. Explanations of “objects of language”, in Saussure’s terms, like words, sentences, grammar, etc. have always been considered important, as key parts of learning/teaching to communicate. Even though CLT claims that its notion of grammar is different from the traditional way of teaching grammar — the grammar competence is for using the rules not memorizing and stating rules (Savignon, 1997, p. 41) —, it still takes the objects of language as if they were real-world entities. According to Savignon (1997), grammatical competence, one of the components of communicative competence in CLT, is mastery of the linguistic code, the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactic, and phonological features of a language and to make use of these features to interpret and to form words and sentences (p. 41). In other words, CLT considers that learners should learn the objects of language so that they can “use” the knowledge of language objects to be able to communicate successfully. If this were true, then how can we explain those who are able to communicate without having conscious knowledge of grammar? Also, how can we explain many second/foreign language learners who have the conscious knowledge of grammar yet still find it is difficult to communicate successfully? The common answer to the first question would be that they have unconscious grammar knowledge, linguistic competence in Chomsky’s terms, “the knowledge internalized by a speaker of a language, which, once learned and possessed, unconsciously permits him to understand and
produce an infinite number of new sentence” (Chomsky, 1979, p. 48-49). In the case of learners who have the knowledge of grammar yet find themselves unable to communicate, it is their performance (in Chomsky’s terms) that is affected, i.e., their “other cognitive systems, aside from competence (memory, etc.)” (Chomsky, 1979, p. 49). The problem with these answers is that people presuppose that there exists “grammar” in the physical domain and that people have “unconscious knowledge of grammar”. But if the objects of grammar are mental objects that exist only in our conscious, the idea of “unconscious knowledge of grammar” is self-contradictory.

The idea of “using” the knowledge of language objects is misleading because it treats the objects of language as physical objects that have certain pragmatic function themselves. An important point we should keep in mind here is that language objects themselves, as non-real-world objects, do not have any inherent “pragmatic function” such as containing information and meaning that we make use of. Accordingly, successful communication is not based on knowledge of language objects. In order to be a good communicator in a second/foreign language, learners need to acquire properties similar to native speakers’ and behave more or less the way native speakers do. When learning how to play an instrument, knowing the name of the instrument’s parts, e.g., “fingerboard”, “soundhole”, etc., and memorizing the notes, e.g., finger placement for guitar chords does not help someone to play the guitar well. We do not use that knowledge to play the instrument well. What do we have to do in order to actually play it? We need to first observe how a musician plays it. Then, we can learn how to play it by learning where our hands should be, how to hold it to make the appropriate sound, when to play or stop, and so on. To play it well, we need to observe how a good player...
plays the instrument. If we try to play the way s/he plays, then we are able to play that instrument. Likewise, if we want to be able to communicate in a target speech community, we need to learn how people communicate in that community. Therefore, the teaching focus should be on how to communicate, not on the learning and using of language. If we eliminate unfounded assumptions from the concepts of “communicative competence”, it is not the ability to use the language or the knowledge of the language, but simply the ability to communicate successfully. The notion of “communicative competence” in this thesis will mean the ability to communicate, which may include nonverbal behavior but excludes purported “grammatical competence.”

2. Comprehensible Input in Language Learning

Input is one of the important components of second/foreign language learning. There is an issue whether input alone would result in language acquisition or not, but it would be generally accepted that the role of input in language learning is important. Lee & VanPatten (1995) illustrate the role of the input in a way that is easy to understand.

Input is to language acquisition what gas is to a car. An engine needs gas to run; without gas, the car would not move an inch. Likewise, input in language learning is what gets the “engine” of acquisition going. Without it, acquisition simply doesn’t happen. (p. 38)

Lee & VanPatten (1995) continue to explain,

Gas itself is a refined and filtered petroleum product; you simply cannot put crude oil into your gas tank and expect the car to run. And because gas is a refine petroleum product, some is better than
As Lee & VanPatten state above, input is an essential part of language learning process and there are better inputs that are more effective than others for language learners. Then what would be the best input that can actually play a role in language acquisition? Many researchers have claimed that comprehensible input is a necessary ingredient for successful language acquisition (Lee & VanPatten, 1995, p. 37). According to Krashen (1985, p. 2), the only way that people acquire language is by understanding messages or by receiving “comprehensible input”. Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991, p. 142) also emphasize the importance of comprehensible input by stating that all cases of successful language acquisition are possible as a result of the availability of comprehensible input. Emphasizing the importance of comprehensible input seems to make sense since learners of second/foreign language must be able to understand what the speaker is saying if acquisition is to happen.

However, the general notion of comprehensible input has to be reexamined from the Hard-Science Linguistic (HSL) point of view in order to bring the concept of “input” into the real world. The input that Krashen, Larsen-Freeman & Long, and Lee & VanPatten talk about above consists of “objects of language” such as words, phrases, sentences, etc. The reason most input in current language lessons consists of language objects is that people only focus on input in terms of learning a language, not on learning how to communicate. Input that helps people to learn how to communicate in the real world does not consist of language, which has no objective existence. According to Coleman (2005 a), input that consists of language data cannot be what makes learning how to communicate possible. Language is an abstract system in the mental domain;
communication occurs in the physical domain. Klein’s (1986) ‘Chinese Room’ example also shows that input consisting only of linguistic data does not make learning possible; it is the information received in parallel to speech input.

Suppose you were locked in a room and were continually exposed to the sound of Chinese coming from a loudspeaker; however long the experiment continued, you would not end up speaking Chinese….

What makes learning possible is the information received in parallel to the linguistic input in the narrow sense (the sound waves).

(Klein, 1986, p. 44, quoted in Coleman, 2005 b, p. 6)

What Klein emphasizes is that input should consist of speech and other information, such as who is involved, when and where the interaction takes place, nonverbal communication like facial expressions and gestures, and the presence of other objects, to make learning actually happen. One thing that needs to be clear here is that this is unlike Krashen’s view (1985, p. 2) that we are able to understand language with the help of context and our knowledge of the world. Adding something like background knowledge or concurrent events to language does not make language input a real thing. Therefore, input should not be thought of as consisting of language objects, but as consisting of the full range of available sensory experience (Coleman, 2005 b, p. 5).

In order to make input comprehensible, input should be provided to learners in terms of showing meanings of communicative behaviors (including speech), not explaining the meanings of words or sentences. Since explanations often only contain “language”, it is not comprehensible at all unless learners already know it. Also, meaning does not reside in words or utterances, but lies in people who perceive it in the linkage
(Yngve, 1996, p. 4). Thus, it is important to show meanings with linkages. (A linkage, in Yngve’s terms, is a theoretical representation of two or more people communicating — an assemblage — that includes just those properties that are required to account for the communicative behavior associated with the assemblage (Yngve, 1996, p. 126). In many language textbooks, so-called “expressions” are presented with translations in the learners’ native language (NL) as input without any linkage involved. Expressions presented with translations in learners’ NL without linkages often create confusion. I have an example from my own experience. When I came to the U.S. for the first time, I was wondering why people kept asking, “How are you?” even though they saw me every day. My confusion came from learning the expression with translation in my NL without any linkage involved. In my textbook, “How are you?” was translated as “Jal ji ne sut so yo?/Jal ji net ni?” Korean people say “Jal ji ne sut so yo?/Jal ji net ni?” when they meet someone after a greater interval of time has passed than normal, or a long time has gone by since the last meeting. Many Korean people would not say “Jal ji ne sut so yo?/Jal ji net ni?” even if they meet somebody again within a week. The input that provided the translation for “How are you?” was not sufficient to show the meaning of what native speakers say as part of a greeting.

Showing various examples for input is also important. Since people do not express what they mean in the exact same way, input should provide various ways of communicating in a certain situation. Contexts in current language textbooks often contain expressions in a situation, but only present one set of dialogue in a situation, thus lacking reality. For example, when learning expressions used in a fast-food restaurant, a typical dialogue presented in a textbook would be like one in Figure 1.
A: Welcome to Burger Town. May I help you?
B: Yes, I’d like to have a hamburger and an order of fries.
A: Do you want anything to drink with that?
B: Yes. I’ll have a cup of coffee.

Figure 1. Dialogue from Expressways 2 (Molinsky & Bliss, 1995, p. 52).

In a real situation, the conversation in a fast-food restaurant may go differently. The staff member may just say, “Next,” instead of saying “May I help you?” and the customer may say, “Can I have a cheeseburger?” instead of saying “I’d like to have a hamburger.” When learners are not provided enough input they are apt to fall into communication breakdowns if things do not go exactly like the one sample they have seen.

In sum, in order for input to play an important role in learning to communicate, it should be comprehensible in the real-world sense. To provide input that contributes to effective learning of how to communicate, teachers should (1) demonstrate the correlation of parts of input across sensory modalities and (2) provide variation within and across communicative linkages (Coleman, 2005 b, p. 211, cited in Wong, 2005, p. 27).

3. Simulations in Language Learning

Simulations in language learning can be referred to as “communications” simulations since they are designed to achieve communicative reality (Bambrough, 1994, p. 16). The main goal of a simulation is to give students exposure to a representation of real-life structure. A simulation entails unexpected events in which “real communication”, not played or acted dialogue, can happen.
**Definition of simulations**

Jones (1982, p. 5) defines a simulation as reality of function in a simulated and structured environment. This definition shows three essential elements in simulations: reality of function, simulated environment, and structure.

Participants must step inside the function mentally and behaviorally in order to fulfill their duties and responsibilities in the situation (Jones, 1982, p. 5). The most important part of simulations is having participants accept the reality of function (role and duties) fully, not thinking as students but taking the role; otherwise the simulation simply will not work. Acceptance of the reality of function means that a participant who has the function of doctor must examine the patient, communicating effectively to do the job. The role of students in simulations, therefore, is (1) taking the functional roles such as reporter, survivor, or customer as a participant, (2) stepping into the event, and (3) shaping the event, carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

In simulations, a provided environment must be simulated. In order to fulfill the essential condition of being a simulated environment, there must be no contact between the participants and the world outside of the classroom (Jones, 1982, p. 5). In other words, when an office in a company is the setting for a simulation, we do not provide a real office or a building, yet we create a simulated environment representing the office that is outside of the classroom by arranging some desks with other props like a computer, office materials, and so on. Likewise, if we need a door, we can provide a simulated environment by putting two chairs together. One thing that we need to keep in mind is that only the environment is simulated, but the behavior of a participant is real.
It is important that the essential “facts” of the simulation environment are provided, not invented by the participants, to preserve reality of function (Jones, 1982, p. 5). Without structure, it is not a simulation because there is no reality of function. Participants need more than a single transactional episode like a businessman in a meeting. In order for the participants to function properly in the simulation, sufficient information such as what kind of business s/he is involved in, the agenda for the meeting, necessary materials for the meeting, etc. need to be provided.

**Simulations vs. Role plays**

Many times, teachers often confuse simulations and role plays even though they use them. The major difference between simulations and role plays is that in simulations the essential facts are provided to participants for the functional part such as their sex, their age, their job, a broken watch, etc., while in role plays, participants have to “invent” key facts or “act out” scenes according to provided specific scripts or descriptions like, “You are angry because your friend broke your watch.” In role plays, participants are encouraged to act according to the script, which is impossible in simulations, where there is no script. Participants in simulations take on roles accepting duties and responsibilities and function according to their own personalities, instead of playing or acting the role. In simulations, imagination may be involved but invention of key facts should be avoided. As Bambrough (1994, p. 14) points out, simulations are differentiated from other role activities in that the roles function within a structure that represents a real world situation, and the elements of this situation are represented consistently in a dynamic way. See Table 1.
Simulations vs. Role plays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simulations</th>
<th>Role plays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Props are provided.**  
(The environment is provided.) | **Props are not necessarily provided.**  
(Participants have to create and imagine key aspects of the environment.) |
| **Key “facts” are provided for “functional part”.**  
(E.g., there are representations for sex, age, job, broken watch, etc.) | Participants invent key facts or have to act according to a specific script or description provided.  
(E.g., “You are angry because…”) |
| **Participants take on a role.** | **Participants play/act a role.** |
| **Imagination may be involved, but invention is prohibited.** | **Participants are encouraged to create/invent whatever is necessary to play the role.** |
| **Creates real communication in a controlled realistic situation.** | **Do dialogues in a fixed context or improvisational speech in an imaginary one.** |

Table 1. Simulations vs. Role plays

**Simulations vs. Games**

Another class activity that teachers often confuse with simulations is games.

Some characteristics of games are analogous to simulations. Both games and simulations are autonomous. The players in a game and the participants in a simulation are in charge of their role accepting the conditions within their particular environment (Jones, 1995, p. 13). However, all participants in a game have only one role and the same duty; they are always players but nothing else, and their duty is to win the game. The difference between simulations and games is on the represented degree of reality of function. Games tend to present little or no reality of function whereas simulations present reality. For example, in western chess, the castle moves, the bishop is powerful, the queen is more
powerful than the king, and the king is the most vulnerable piece. However, in reality, a castle cannot move, a bishop may be powerful in politics but not in a war, a queen has less power than the king, and a king is the most powerful person in the kingdom. There is no clear cut divide between simulations and games in this matter; rather it is a continuum. Comparing western chess to Chinese chess, the latter has more reality of function since the characteristics of the pieces represent a greater degree of reality of function. For instance, the cannon, in Chinese chess, always moves forward skipping one piece, which represents a real cannon’s shooting, and the elephant cannot across the river. Games like Monopoly or Risk present more reality of function than chess games. The more reality of function that is represented, the more the activities are likely to be simulations. Simulations always present a very high degree of reality of function, otherwise they are not simulations.

According to Jones (1995), the key distinction between games and simulations is the existence of real-world ethics (p. 13). For example, suppose there is a game called “Survivor”. One play’s turn s/he rolls a dice and gets to the zone where s/he can get a bonus card so s/he gets a bonus card. The card says, “Take one of another player’s provisions.” The player chooses one of another player’s food items. As a result of that, the payer whose food items were taken dies on the island and loses the game. In games, it is acceptable to take others’ food even though it causes their death because the player is just following the rule and fulfilling his/her duty. In simulations, however, the action will not be appropriate because of the ethics issue.

The list that I present in Table 2 is Jones’ interpretation of proper terminology that helps us to understand the distinction between simulations and other interactive activities.
Note that the ‘inappropriate’ list is not intended to reflect adversely on the techniques of games, informal drama and exercises (Jones, 1995, p. 15). It just offers a boundary line indicating what is appropriate in simulations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriate</th>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simulation, activity, event</td>
<td>Game drama, role play, exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players, actor, puzzler, trainee, student</td>
<td>Teacher, trainer, instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator (or organizer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior, function, profession</td>
<td>Playing, acting, staging, puzzling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role (functional)</td>
<td>Role (acting a part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-world responsible behavior</td>
<td>Winning (losing) the game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-world ethics</td>
<td>Point scoring, having fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional conduct</td>
<td>Performing the exercise (games, etc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Simulations vs. Other interactive activities (Jones, 1995, p. 14).

*Analogy between Jones’ simulations and Yngve’s view*

Jones’s (1982) interpretation of simulations in language learning is compatible with Yngve’s (1996) view on learning how to communicate. Both Jones and Yngve have a similar focus on the reality of function. In simulations, students take a role and function according to the assigned role as participants in a simulated and structured environment. To put this in Yngve’s terms, learners (“communicating individuals”, Yngve’s term for our world of people communicating in the physical world) should be engaged in a re-
created real-world linkage participating in communicative activities. Substances in the settings in simulations also have the same functional role as those in the real-world situation. For example, in a survivor simulation, a map is the deserted island where participants are located, and cards with pictures of food actually functions as the food on the island. In Yngve’s terms, the survivors are the “participants”, who are involved in a particular assemblage, maps and the cards representing function of the deserted island and the food are “props”, and the deserted island itself is the “setting” of the participants.

From Jones’ point of view, language in simulations is cohesive and functional. Although Jones talks about language as something that can be used, his point that language is functional is somewhat different from that of other traditional linguists. Jones (1982, pp. 7-8) states,

The word “functional” is not used here in the utilitarian sense of being able to order a meal or ask the way to the beach. It includes all the social language appropriate to the job. If the participant is a diplomat, then appropriate language is the language of diplomacy, and the appropriate behavior includes all those social skills and social remarks which can make the diplomacy more effective. … A barrister will use the language of advocacy, the coroner will use the language of inquest, the dictator will use the language of power.

I will take “the functional part of language” here not to mean the pragmatic use of language objects; rather, it includes appropriate communicative behavior that leads to fulfillment of the reality of function in a simulation.
Simulations can provide realistic situations that have functional resemblance to the outside world of the classroom and lead learners to create real communication by offering them roles in which to function.
Chapter III

The merits of using simulations for language classes

1. Real communicative activity

In order to improve communication skills, learners need to be provided a great deal of opportunity to communicate with others. Simulation is a perfect activity that offers ample opportunities for learners to communicate in the target language. As Jones (1982, p. 9) mentions, simulations provide the participants with the mutual need to communicate and the need is inherent in the activity. In other words, participants naturally communicate in order to fulfill the role or solve the problem in simulations.

Unlike reading a part in a dialogue in a text, in which learners usually memorize the script and act, participants in simulations create real communication according to roles, functions, and duties. In a classroom activity like the “performing a dialogue”, teachers assign roles such as staff or customer to students and expect students to perform exactly the same dialogue as the one that students learned as input for the lesson. In this kind of activity, learners seem to participate in a communicative activity by talking, but it is merely saying lines repeating the scripted dialogue. There is no negotiating meaning between participants; thus performing a dialogue does not create real communication.

Not all interactive activities that involve speech are communication. We do not call a dialogue in a play or movie “communication”. Real communication involves real people who show their personality and thought in the communication while discussing real
issues. Playing or acting is not real communication because it is based on a script, and the negotiation of meaning does not exist in playing or acting.

Role plays, involving free speech, and games can be communicative activities, yet they lack reality of function. Free talking in a role play seems to create ample opportunities to communicate, but participants will pretend to be in the assigned role, as opposed to taking on the role, and often create conversation guessing what the person in the position would say, not how they would actually behave in the role. Also, free speech activities are apt to create irrelevant communication to the subject or goal of the lesson. This is because, in such free speech activities, participants have a general role and task (for example, the role is performing customer, and the task is returning goods), not a specific role and task defined by a simulated and structured environment, the activity can go in a different direction from what the teacher intended or expected. For instance, suppose we are having a free speech role play activity about surviving in a desert. Participant A says, “Let’s go to the east. There is an oasis,” and participant B says, “No, there is no oasis.” Participant A insists his/her way and keeps saying, “Yes, there is an oasis.” and so on. In this case, participants are just arguing over the imaginary thought of the existence of an oasis, instead of discussing how they are going to survive. The teachers’ purpose of the activity was creating real communication based on decision-making. However, the conversation goes in a completely different direction from what the teacher intended. In other cases, participants may not be able to invent anything to say, so they may end up saying nothing but, “I don’t know.”

On the other hand, real communication is generated in simulations. Participants in simulations continually interact exchanging thoughts and negotiating meanings as they
take roles and try to fulfill the duty. Jones (1982) depicts a good simulation as a nuclear power breeder reactor. As a nuclear power breeder reactor produces its own fuel, communication in a good simulation leads to more communication, ideas generate ideas, talk leads to thought, and thought leads to more talk (Jones, 1982, p. 9).

In the “performing dialogue” activity that provides an opportunity to speak, but not to communicate, the success is based on learners’ successful performance, meaning performing dialogue the way the teacher expects. Learners are considered to fail to learn expressions of the lesson if they do not perform in the “right” way. Unlike this kind of programmed learning, the success in simulations does not depend on doing the conversation right or wrong, or doing it according to the teachers’ expectation. In simulations, learning is more important than a successful performance; therefore, the failure in communication between participants is as valuable as success. When there is a communication breakdown, participants will negotiate the meaning, and this results in more communication. Moreover, not only is communication generated within the simulations but also a good deal of the learning may occur afterwards through reflection and discussion (Jones, 1982, p. 9).

2. Acquisition, not learning

According to Krashen (1982), language acquisition is a subconscious process: language acquirers are not usually aware of the fact that they are acquiring language, but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication (as cited in Gass & Selinker, 2001). Krashen distinguishes language acquisition from language learning, which is defined as a conscious process with the learned knowledge represented
consciously in the brain. In his argument, learned knowledge can never be converted into acquired knowledge, and thus there is a “no interface position with respect to the relationship between acquisition and learning” (Krashen, 1985, p. 38, cited in Wang, 2005, p. 5). Before integrating the concept of acquisition into simulation, Krashen’s notion of acquisition needs to be reconsidered. Krashen’s definition of acquisition conflicts with the real-world perspective because he still implicitly accepts that language exists in the physical domain. There cannot be unconscious language learning because language exists only in our conscious mind. Therefore, Krashen’s notion of language acquisition is self-contradictory. To move this into the real world, we need to focus on the acquisition of an ability to communicate, not the acquisition of language.

Simulations are untaught events (Jones, 1982, p. 2). There is no explicit language teaching involved in simulations. Also, there is no teacher who teaches how to say or what to say in a situation inside the simulation activity. Learners as participants are the ones who shape the event and are involved in the communicative action. Participants can acquire how to communicate implicitly during simulation activities. When a communication breakdown occurs, participants will be actively involved in negotiating meaning to find the way to understand each other. Participants will try to speak in different ways or use nonverbal behavior to make others understand what they mean. During the process, learners can acquire the properties that are necessary to communicate successfully. Therefore, simulations deal with acquiring “how to communicate”, not learning or knowing about a language, since participants do not think about language but try to communicate during the activity.
3. Motivation

Motivation plays an important role in improving communicative ability. However, we often misunderstand that motivation is simply getting the students interested in what we want them to do. Motivation affects an action or behavior based on different reasons or goals. If someone is motivated to learn something, it usually produces a positive outcome. Cao (2004) summarizes the distinction between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation based on Deci & Ryan’s work (1985). Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable while extrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it leads to a specific outcome (Cao, 2004, p. 19).

Motivation is inherent in a simulation (Jones 1982, p. 10). It is self-generated since motive arises out of function, the duties, the responsibilities and the circumstances in which the participants find themselves (Jones, 1982, p. 10). When people are intrinsically motivated, they not only experience interest and enjoyment but also feel competent and self-determining (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 34). According to Deci & Ryan (1985, p. 256), being intrinsically motivated to learn improves the quality of learning and that those conditions that are autonomous and informational will promote more effective learning. In addition, intrinsic motivation also lowers anxiety (Gottifried, 1982, cited in Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 256). Since there is no teacher in simulations, learners participate in the activity without trying to please the teacher or worrying about being correct. Making mistakes and even failing the communication are accepted in simulations. Learners do not have to be afraid to fail because communication in simulation does not have to be successful to be beneficial. In fact, failures are as desirable as success (Jones,
Learners have ample chances to make it work, not make it right, while they negotiate meanings in simulations.

As Jones (1982, p. 11) states, motivation from function and duty is an essential ingredient in a simulation. Therefore, no effort to motivate learners will be necessary as long as learners accept the reality of their functions. Motivation may also come from the emotional satisfaction or the pleasure of power to make decisions and the enjoyment of interactive excitement.

4. Realistic experience

When learning how to communicate in a target community, realistic experiences are essential since they increase motivation. In simulations, subjects/contexts are more meaningful to learners since they are inside of the simulation, not outside of the simulation. Activities in simulations can accurately portray real life situations; thereby simulations can provide a realistic context. Being participants within the simulation, learners become a part of the event and involved in real life situations where they have to deal with issues to resolve. Therefore, the situation that they are in is not an “imaginary world”. Also, learners in simulations communicate in order to fulfill their duties inherent in functions. They do not communicate in order to learn language skills or other purposes; they communicate for their own sake in situations. Another reason the activities in simulations are realistic to learners is because they are not asked to play or act out being someone else, for example, pretending/acting like a doctor, a waitress, or a businessman as opposed to doing the job of a doctor, a waitress, or a businessman. In fact, pretense and acting should be avoided. In simulations, the problems that the participants
face in the event become their own issues when they step inside of the simulation, accepting their roles and duties. What learners experience in simulations is firsthand experience since they are deeply involved in the situation, and they are the ones who decide what to do to solve the problems. Participants change internal properties to match the properties of the person for the duration of the simulation.

Since learners have experienced various realistic situations through simulations, they will feel more comfortable and more prepared in unrehearsed situations. Therefore, through the realistic experiences in simulations, learners can gain confidence when communicating with others in a real situation. It is not the “I’ve read it, so now I know it” type of confidence: It is the “I’ve done it, so I can do it” confidence (Jones, 1983, p. 12).

5. Cultural experience

According to Brown (1986, p. 34), “culture is a deeply ingrained part of our being, but language that is spoken among members of a culture is the most visible and available expression of that culture” (quoted in Kemp, 2003, p. 13). Learning how to communicate cannot be separated from its culture because a unique culture is formed among people who communicate together. It is necessary to understand and know how to behave properly in the culture in order to communicate successfully in the target group. However, learning cultural aspects of a target speech community is often excluded in many language classrooms. Also, learners rarely have chances to have cultural experiences in the language classroom. When the culture of a target group is presented in language classrooms, teachers often explain about the country or the culture apart from the target speech community. However, language and the culture cannot be separated since the
relevant properties are within the person and the groups they interact in. The separation
of language and the culture is artificial, based on the assumption of the reality of
language.

Simulations can offer an environment where learners learn how to behave in
linkages. In simulations, learners, being participants in the event, will experience the way
people behave in a certain culture. For example, through a post office or a bank
simulation, the Korean learners of (American) English will learn that they have to wait in
line until the employee in the post office or bank looks at them or says “Next.” or “I can
help you over here.” etc if they are not looking back. There is no need to explain about
the culture since learners can acquire how to behave in the target culture naturally
through simulations. Learners may even learn more if there is a communication
breakdown due to cultural differences. Suppose, for instance, participant A, who is
Korean, is the customer and Participant B, who is German, is the employee in a fast-food
restaurant simulation. Participant A orders food but not a drink.

B: You don’t want a drink?
A: [nodding his/her head]
B: What do you want?
A: Excuse me?
B: What do you want to drink?
A: I don’t want a drink.
B: ???

In this conversation, the Korean learner’s behavior of nodding his/her head shows the
agreement with what participant B says. However, people speaking English have a
different property when responding to questions like ‘you don’t want a drink? /don’t you
want a drink?’ They will say “No. (I don’t want a drink.)” or shake their heads when they
do not want a drink. There is a communication breakdown due to the different properties between the two participants. In the process of negotiating meaning to understand each other or discussing this communication breakdown during debriefing after the simulation activity, the Korean learner will learn that when s/he is asked “You don’t want a drink?” s/he has to respond according to his/her agreement with the fact of whether s/he wants a drink, not with what the other says.

Exposure to the cultural experiences of communication may give students confidence for future cross-cultural interactions that they may have with native speakers as well as help to prevent misunderstandings (Rivers, 1987, p. 12, cited in Kemp, 2003, P. 14). Learners can acquire the properties of people in the target culture through the experience in simulations. As a result, learners will know how to behave in the target culture and they will be more confident in real situations.

6. Improving communication strategies

Simulations are an ideal way of developing communication skills, since communication plays a vital role in simulations. Littlewood (1981, cited in Jones, 1983, p. 8) states that the learners must develop skills/strategies for using language to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situations. Since the focus in this thesis is on learning/teaching how to communicate rather than learning language, his concept of using language to communicate needs to be reconsidered. Learners have to develop skills/strategies to communicate properly, not for using language properly, for effective communication in a certain situation. When teaching is focused on language itself, learners cannot experience real communication since there is no negotiation of
meanings. In this case, when a communication breakdown occurs, learners just fail the
tasks. On the other hand, when teaching how to communicate, learners can have ample
opportunities to negotiate meaning since it is a necessary ingredient in communication.
Simulations can provide the environment where real communication can be carried out
because participants are constantly negotiating meaning while doing activities in
simulations. Participants will try to find a way of showing what they mean when a
communication breakdown occurs. Even if participants fail to negotiate meanings in the
event, it is still valuable because they will learn from the failure. This is the merit of
simulations.

In simulations, communication will be always generated to discuss issues, and
learners will be involved in various types of communicative activities. Within simulations,
learners will face many situations where different communication skills may be required.
Sometimes learners have to initiate the conversation to do the job. They may have to
convince others by presenting their thought or they may have to reach an agreement
through an argument. Through exploring different situations, learners will learn how to
communicate properly and effectively. As a result, learners will be able to improve their
communication skills/strategies.
Chapter IV

Suggesting how simulations can be used in an EFL class

1. Basic Level

Teachers often believe that integrating simulations for basic level learners is not suitable. I acknowledge that we cannot expect a full range of conversation from learners at this level since they have limited communication ability in the target speech community. However, it is possible for learners to be able to communicate in a certain situation if they are provided with enough comprehensible input prior to the simulation activity.

When using simulations for a basic level class, it is a good idea to use/create simple simulations with less complicated processes. The idea of doing simulations itself may overwhelm learners at this level if the subject is totally new to them or the process is too complicated. Learners may feel more comfortable with familiar subjects that are based on real life. At the same time, fictional simulations may help learners be less inhibited and lower their anxiety. In order to have learners able to participate in a simulation, good comprehensible input in the real-world sense must be provided. Since basic level learners have limited skills to communicate, simple simulations about such situations in real life such as greeting, asking directions, ordering food at a fast-food restaurant, etc. and fictional simulations with uncomplicated sequences are recommended. The choice can be based on the learners’ needs and interests.
Here, I would like to show one example that may be used for a basic class activity. Let us say we are doing a simulation for asking directions. We can do it with props such as maps, pictures, markers, and so on. Providing a good comprehensible input for the basic level learners is important to be able to run a simulation activity later. In the briefing stage, input that includes showing the meanings of basic elements of street directions, expressions of movement, gambits that trigger repetition, etc. has to be provided by using pictures and video clips. The teacher also can perform the action to show the meanings of communicative behaviors. Small activities that can help learners to acquire the properties that are necessary in the communication for asking and answering directions can be done. For example, the teacher can adapt a game like ‘go fish’ for learners to identify the elements, or have learners follow the teacher’s instruction (the teacher says “go straight” and learners walk straight, etc.).

After providing comprehensible input for the simulation, the teacher will pair learners and give them task cards and then explain about roles and tasks. The information may be given and discussed in the learners’ native language. Then, the teacher gives participants different maps. Participant A will have a map with pictures of buildings with names of stores on it, and participant B will have a map with pictures of buildings without names and the list of destinations. A marker like a little man or a car will be given to participant B. Before the activity begins, the starting point needs to be shown to both participants. Participant B has to ask participant A for directions, and participant A has to give directions to participant B. For instance, participant B asks participant A “Excuse me, where is Mercy Hospital?”, and participant A answers, “Go one block and turn left on Mercy Road. Um… Then go two blocks. It’s on your right.” After listening to
participant A, participant B starts moving the marker to the destination following the
directions that participant A has given to him/her and stops at the right places. If
participant B forgets how to go after leaving the start point, s/he may stop and ask for the
direction again, but s/he has to initiate a new conversation since we meet different people
on the road in real life. Participant A also has to respond as a different person giving new
directions. Participant A should be able to see participant B’s map and marker in order
for participant A to know where the new starting point is, but participant B is not allowed
to see participant A’s map. Also, participant B should not be able to see the destination
before he/she actually gets there to make the activity realistic since we cannot see the
destination from the starting point on the street in the real situation.

Another way of doing this activity is by using computers, if such equipment can
be provided, and if participants know how to use a computer. In fact, using computers
would be the best method for the asking directions activity because participants then have
a limited view of streets and buildings on the screen, so it offers a realistic environment.
We can further adapt Coleman’s (2002 c) adaptation of the SIM COPTER (1996)
simulation and modify it for basic level classes. He used the simulation in a college pre-
freshman composition course for ESL students.

In the briefing stage, students get information about roles and basic operation of
helicopter in SIM COPTER as well as instructions on how the simulation will work. In
the simulation activity, there are two parts to the scenario. First, the participants take the
role of a pilot employed by the company ‘Speedy HeliSevice’. The pilots are required to
search for the destination by helicopter using a radar and compass on the helicopter’s
control panel, but without a map of the city. Then, after they find it, they have to write
directions for a VIP visitor (Mr. Roberts) on how he can walk there at a later time. In the second part, the participants become Mr. Roberts and — in a different city — have to reach a different destination with the directions that another pilot wrote, but this time, as Mr. Roberts, walking to the destination, not going by helicopter. After all activities are done, the written directions will be evaluated in the debriefing stage. The teacher selects one or two anonymous sets of directions for a test. The teacher and the students discuss where to go while testing the written directions.

If a written assignment is too difficult for the basic level students, we can simply have students paired and give them tasks of giving directions and finding the destinations by speaking instead of doing a writing assignment. The process may be similar to the one that is presented above with props. Teachers also can create a different story using the same SIM COPTER simulation. For example, instead of a pilot employed by a company and VIP, we can make a story like cops chasing a criminal. Having students paired, one student gives directions to his/her partner from the helicopter and the other has to walk to the destination where the criminal ran. The teacher may arrange the seats with their computer monitors back-to-back so that students cannot see each other’s screens. On the task cards, the teacher may also want to mention that the students are not allowed either to look at each other’s screens or to discuss the directions face to face over the computers. By preventing students seeing the partners’ screen or talking face to face, the activity can remain realistic.

Learners at this level tend to look at the teacher for help when they do not know how to name an element or forget what to say. However, it is important that the teacher reminds learners that there is no teacher within the simulations and encourages them to
negotiate meanings with other participants. Learners may be given directions about the process and the tasks for the simulation in their native language. Also, they may be allowed to speak their native language when they ask relevant questions for keeping the simulation going.

2. Intermediate level

For intermediate level learners, teachers can use/create more complicated real-life subjects such as visiting doctors and job interviews or simple fiction simulations like Jones’ ‘SPACE CRASH’ simulation (1987, cited in Chan, 1999, p. 79-85). Comprehensible input may be needed, especially if the subject/content of the simulation is new to learners. For real-life simulations, teachers can create scenarios about the subject and prepare the task cards for the participants. The briefing stages may consist of two parts; one with comprehensible input for new elements and expressions and another with the briefing for the simulation activity. If learners are not familiar with doing simulations, it is worth spending time to explain how simulations work. It is important to instruct them on how they are expected to behave in simulations. According to Jones (1982, p. 34), the controller should provide enough information for the participants to understand what is involved in the briefing stage and ensure that all required documents are present. Teachers may want to emphasize the necessity of role acceptance and stress not to play or act so that learners can behave properly in the simulations.

Now, let us see an example of a real-life subject simulation. If we do the ‘doctor visit’ simulation, teachers first have to present input for new elements like nurse, doctor, reception desk, prescription, various kind of medicine, and so on. Teachers may have to
show what people mean when they describe the symptoms for various illnesses. Also they may need to show meanings of what people say when they make an appointment.

One thing to remember here is that the input we provide does not consist of information about grammar. Prior to the simulation activity, sufficient information about roles and tasks also needs to be provided. Teachers have to prepare role cards that include information about who they are and what the tasks are. The teacher may want to discuss the roles and tasks with learners to make sure they understand their roles and tasks. Teachers may allow learners to speak their native language to discuss these matters. For the simulation activity, props representing key elements like an examination table, a doctor’s gown, a patient chart, etc. need to be provided. The real objects for props would be the best, but imitated objects can substitute for them as long as they have the same functional role as real objects. Given task cards and props, participants are asked to fulfill the functions of their roles. For example, as a patient, a participant should be able to explain about his/her symptoms and ask questions related to the illness or prescription. If one is a receptionist, s/he should get information from the patient and if one is a nurse, s/he should do pre-exam tasks like measuring weight, temperature, checking pulse, etc. As for the role of doctor, s/he needs to examine the patient, asking and answering questions involved in the situation.

When using fiction simulations, briefing about the simulation needs to be done. If some elements or expressions that appear in the simulations are new to learners, teachers have to prepare for that too. Jones (1982, p. 20) suggests that the teachers actually participate in the simulation ahead of time with a group of friends or colleagues. He suggests this because this may reveal whether the level of communicative difficulty of
the simulation is suitable. Through participation in the simulation, the teachers can get ideas like what input they need to provide or how they will provide it. Also, the teachers can prepare props the participants need. Many of Jones’ simulations can be used for the intermediate level. Teachers also can create simulations that generate discussion and decision-making. If the learners are teenagers, topics such as deciding on school uniforms, interviewing celebrities, or a meeting for an entertainment magazine will be interesting subjects. As for EFL learners, topics about special issues in that country can be interesting since they are familiar with the issue, and they will have chances to discuss the issue in English, not in their native language.

3. Advanced level

Learners at this level are expected to be able to communicate successfully in most real-life situations. However, the learners may not have native-like proficiency. To help them attain native-like proficiency, the teacher may want them to have a variety of experiences in more complicated situations. Using/creating high-level simulations may fulfill the learners’ need. Teachers may want to consider the learners’ specific needs such as improving communication skills for business meetings or professional jobs like doctor, pharmacist, or nurse if the group of the learners has the same interests or needs. For this level of learners, teachers do not have to limit the choice to a simulation that is aimed at second/foreign language learners; teachers can choose simulations that are created for native speakers. In this case, input may have to be presented, but often input in the briefing stage might not be necessary for the advanced level learners as they will receive a great deal during the simulation itself. However, briefing for the activity has to be done.
Coleman’s aircraft company simulation (2005 c) can be an example of a simulation for the advanced level. This simulation is designed for ESL learners and it has been used for both native speakers and non-native speakers. In this simulation, each group has to make an aircraft with paper that fulfills government regulations, with participants being staff members of an aircraft design company. The participant companies, as candidates for the production design, have to submit a prototype for testing as part of the DOVE (Drone Overflight Virtual Exploration) Development Project presented by a governmental organization, ORIUS, the Oceanographic Research Institute of the United States (See Coleman, 2005 c).

In the briefing stage, participants are informed about the roles and tasks: who they are going to be and what they need to do to fulfill the job. Also, information about this event and specific regulations for making an aircraft such as project goal, payload, dimensions, wing surfaces, and materials will be given.

During the activity, participants, in a group (DOVE Project Development Team), first have to be allocated roles — who is going to be the manager, the supply liaison, the account liaison, the draftsman, and the launch specialist. If there are fewer than five people in a group, some participants can take more than one role. After jobs are decided for each group member then participants discuss how they are going to make their airplane considering the regulations. After they develop the design for their plane, one of the participants, who is the supply liaison in the group, comes to the supply warehouse manager, who was the controller previously, and ask for materials they need. When the deadline comes, participants have to finish up their work and be prepared for an inspection and a flight test. One of the group members, as a launch specialist, comes to
the test flight area and flies their aircraft, and then the controller, in the role of the government flight inspector, will score its performance.

After the simulation activity, learners are asked to write a paper about their experience making an aircraft. The teacher may adapt this activity and change it according to his/her intention for the lesson. Participants might be asked to make a proposal and give a presentation without actually making an aircraft. Or, in the debriefing stage, the class may have an open discussion about their success or failure in making the airplane instead of completing the writing assignment.
Chapter V
Discussion and Conclusions

The main purpose of using simulations for learning to communicate is to provide an environment where learners have ample opportunity for creating communication. However, simulations cannot be just thrown at learners, with learners being expected to create communication right away. This would be like having soldiers with guns to fight the war without giving them any bullets, and expecting them to win the war. Learners, especially those whose proficiency level is below the high-intermediate level, need to be provided enough input before the activity so that they can be ready for the activity. Otherwise, learners feel overwhelmed when doing a simulation because they do not know how to engage in communication. One thing to remember is that input mentioned here does not mean providing language input such as words and sentence translation or grammar instruction. The input should consist of showing the meanings of the communicative behaviors that teachers want learners to acquire. The comprehensible input that shows the meaning within a linkage (in Yngve's terms, 1996, p. 126; see the discussion above p. 10) needs to be provided so that learners can acquire the necessary properties of the person to communicate in the linkage.

The key to avoiding breakdowns in simulations is providing sufficient information on roles so that participants know enough to function in those roles without play-acting. It is also important to focus on communication itself, not success in the
simulation, since the aim of using a simulation is not to produce the correct words, grammar and pronunciation, but to learn to communicate effectively according to roles, functions, and duties (Jones, 1982, p. 38).

The teacher’s role in simulations is to be a good controller. Jones (1982, p. 40) likens teachers’ role to a traffic controller: “a person who controls the flow of traffic, tries to avoid bottlenecks, but does not tell individual motorists the direction of their journeys.” There is no teacher inside simulation activities. Participants are responsible for solving assigned problems and making decisions. Thus, helping or suggesting ideas to participants to solve problems or make decisions should not occur during simulation activities. Even though there is no teacher in simulation activities, the teacher in the role of the controller is very important during a simulation since it is the controller who has the job of making the simulation possible (Jones, 1982, p. 40).

Debriefing after simulation activities is very important. Debriefing is not just summing up the event; in fact, it is the most critical stage of the simulation process. Jones (1982, p. 47) suggests that it would be a good idea to start the debriefing by asking each participant to explain briefly what s/he did and why. This will let learners continue to be involved in communicative activities as well as put them in the picture about what happened. For the basic level learners, the teacher may have to help them to explain what they did and why by asking questions like “What was your role?”, “Where did you go?”, “What did you want to do/buy/ask ?”, ‘Why did you do that?”, etc. since they may not be able to explain fully in the target language. After everyone gives a brief explanation, then the teacher can guide the discussion. In some cases, the students may be able to generate discussion without the teacher’s guidance. The discussion may be done in the learners’
native language for the basic level learners. Jones (1982, p. 48) also points out that the
debriefing stage is not for rerunning of the arguments dealt with in the simulation. The
debriefing should concentrate on those aspects of the behavior that correspond to the
teacher’s aims. The debriefing is an opportunity for learners to see their behaviors
objectively from their experience as participants and to allow them to reflect on the
course of events in the simulation (Bambrough, 1994, p. 75). An ample amount of
learning may happen during the debriefing from their experience of success and failure in
the simulation.

Conclusion

Over the past twenty years second language instruction has shifted from an
explicit focus on language and grammar to an emphasis on the expression and
comprehension of meaning (Lightbown & Spada, 1995, cited in Chan, 1999, p. 11). This
is not exceptional in EFL instruction. In Korea, there are a lot of institutes for teaching
survival English, and school English education is also moving to the “communicative
language teaching” approach. However, the teaching focus is still on using language to
communicate — foregrounding language, not on “how to communicate” directly. It has
therefore only changed the subjects/contents of the lessons. There is no direct teaching of
how to communicate, how to negotiate meanings, or how to behave in linkages. As a
result, learners often get into communication breakdowns in real situations. Without
rethinking and changing the way of how we think about teaching English, it is difficult to
help learners to improve communication skills effectively. Another difficulty that EFL
learners face to improve communication skills is that they are in classroom environments
that provide few opportunities to engage in communication in realistic situations. Practice plays an important role in improving communication skills, but EFL learners have a lack of opportunities to do so.

Integrating simulations in EFL classes may help to overcome those challenges. As Crookall & Oxford (1990, p. 7) state, simulation is an extremely powerful means of helping people to acquire certain foreign or second language skills. Since simulations focus on communication rather than language itself, they are real communicative activities. Also, simulations help learners to learn how to communicate, not learning the “language”, through authentic experiences. Learners in simulations are intrinsically motivated due to the characteristic of simulations, which is an important fact in learning how to communicate in the target language successfully. In addition, simulations can help learners to acquire the properties of people through cultural experience so that they know how to behave in that culture. At last but certainly not the least, learners can improve their communicative strategies through negotiating meanings constantly in simulations.

Even though integrating simulations in language classes is somewhat challenging because it requires more time to prepare than other activities, it is certainly worth doing it. With teachers understanding of simulations and proper preparation, there is no doubt simulations will help learners to improve their communication skills.
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