

HIROSHIMA UNIVERSITY広島大学

Reflection Sheet: Class 5

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND COMMUNICATION II

外国語習得とコミュニケーション II

**Submission Information**

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1. Introduction

This session explored how positional identity shapes classroom dynamics, particularly in second language (L2) learning environments. It examined how learners’ seating choices, group formation, and participation reflect their personal and social identities. The session referenced theories such as Hecht’s Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) and social positioning in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms to explain how societal norms, rules, and individual decisions influence behavior in classroom settings.

1. **Classroom Identity**

## Identity Formation in Classrooms

According to Hecht’s CTI, identity is expressed and developed through communication. Personal identity highlights individuality, while social identity emphasizes group belonging. In classrooms, students build their social identities by interacting with peers, following rules, and participating in activities. Their words, actions, and even seating choices play a role in this identity construction.

## Moral Orders and Positioning

Where students sit in the classroom can signal how they see themselves or how others perceive them. For instance, sitting in the front may show confidence or engagement, while sitting at the back might suggest shyness or a desire to avoid attention. Other practical reasons, like access to outlets for charging devices, may also influence seating choices, though these are often tied to broader norms. These decisions are shaped by cultural, group, and institutional norms, which establish the expected “acceptable” behaviors for students. For example, in Japanese classrooms, students’ adherence to native-speaker norms reflects societal and educational ideologies, reinforcing hierarchical positioning.

# Power and Resistance

The way students position themselves in classrooms varies greatly. This positioning often reflects their comfort level and confidence in engaging with the L2. Some learners use their first language (L1) as a coping mechanism or form of passive resistance. This choice often signifies a struggle with classroom power dynamics and the roles assigned to them. For example, native speakerism can make non-native speakers feel less capable, prompting them to resist these perceptions by relying on their L1 as a way to assert themselves and reclaim confidence.

## Multiple Positioning in Interactions

Students’ positioning also depends on who they interact with, through "multiple positioning." Some students confidently assert their abilities, while others may shy away from interactions, reflecting struggles with knowledge and self-assurance. These dynamics highlight how power circulates in classroom interactions, influencing relationships and learning opportunities. Teachers play a key role in managing these dynamics to create a fair and inclusive environment where all students feel supported.

## Insights from Kayi-Aydar’s Study

Building on this idea, Kayi-Aydar’s study examined how social positioning impacts L2 learning through the experiences of two talkative ESL students, Ahmad and Tarek. Though both were outspoken, they had opposite social outcomes. Tarek gained peer acceptance by adapting his behavior and using humor, while Ahmad became isolated due to perceptions of arrogance. This highlighted how classroom dynamics, influenced by both teacher responses and peer perceptions, shape learning opportunities.

# Conclusion

This session underscored that classroom identity is dynamic, shaped by interactions, norms, and power structures. Successful ESL learning in L2 classrooms goes beyond language acquisition, as it involves addressing inequalities, encouraging inclusive participation, and creating an environment where every student feels valued. As such, teachers hold a critical role in guiding these interactions, ensuring fairness, and that all students have the opportunity to achieve their learning goals.