The dynamic nature of flow in the EFL classroom: Learners' perceptions of inter-cultural taskbased interaction.



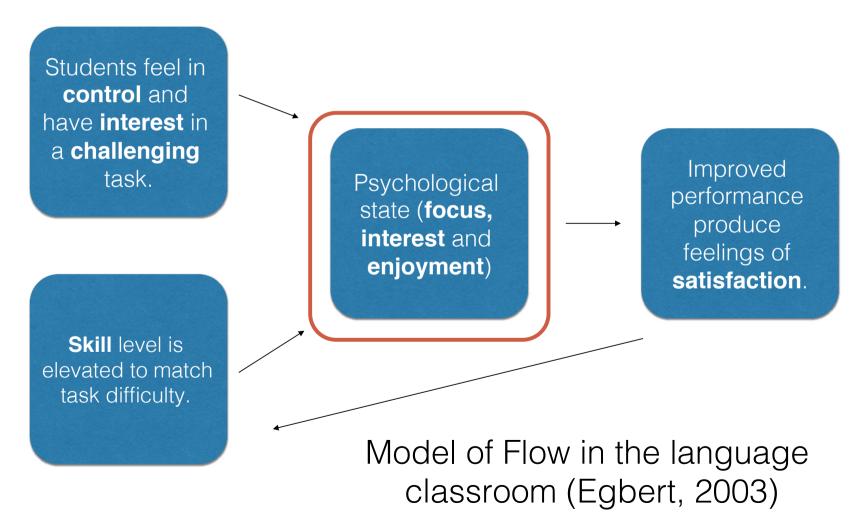
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Flow

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990)

"The optimal task experience" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011)



Flow, tasks, and WTC

- A flow state occurs when learners are <u>productive</u> —not passive—resulting in "higher levels of performance" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 74)
- During a communicative task, a readiness to enter into communication (WTC) is facilitated by the following flowfacilitating conditions:
 - A balance of task challenges and learner skills e.g. preparation time; appropriate task difficulty.
 - Control over the task design/implementation e.g. learner-generated content; choice over interlocutor
 - Clear task objectives that <u>focuses</u> learners' attention
 - Personal <u>interest</u> in the task topic

Inter-cultural contact

- Studies in naturalistic settings have linked intercultural contact to increased self confidence (Clément, Dörnyei, Noels, 1994; Labrie & Clément, 1986; Noels & Clément, 1996)
- Computer-mediated inter-cultural tasks in the ESL classroom generate <u>elevated flow levels</u> (Egbert, 2003)
- Computer-mediated Japanese-Taiwanese interactions produce <u>heightened curiosity</u> and <u>self confidence</u>
 (Freiermuth & Huang, 2012)
- Inter-cultural contact can lead to increased anxiety due to lack of familiarity (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002)

Research questions

- 1. Does intercultural contact affect <u>flow</u> during the performance of oral tasks?
- 2. Does inter-cultural contact affect <u>language</u> <u>production</u> during the performance of oral tasks?
- 3. What <u>dimensions of flow</u> emerge during the performance of oral tasks?
- 4. How do the <u>dimensions of flow</u> change in strength over over five tasks?

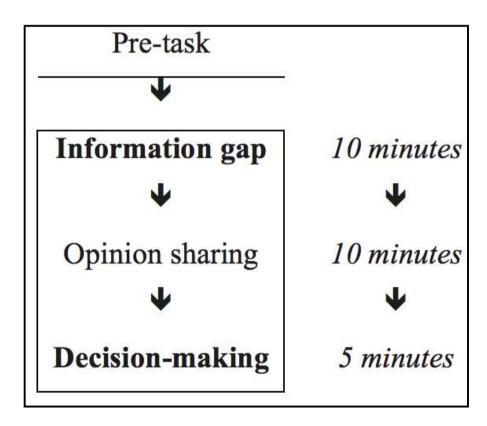
Participants

Intra-cultural group	Inter-cultural group	International student		
(EFL class)	(EFL class)	volunteers		
21 Japanese learners of	21 Japanese learners of	21 international students		
English	English	(10 nationalities)		
1st year	1st year	rt-term study abroad students		
TOEFL: 430-470	TOEFL: 430-470	13 native-English speakers & 8 non-native English speakers		

Research design

Intra-cultural group, N=21	Inter-cultural group, N=21			
		Phase 1		
Japanese Pa *Tas	Task performance 1 (Week 2-6)			
		Phase 2		
Japanese- Japanese Pairs *Tasks 1-5	Japanese- international Pairs *Tasks 1-5	Task performance 2 (Week 8-12)		

Task implementation





Data collection

Flow questionnaire

(Egbert, 2003) *Task 1-4 *Task 1R-4R

Learner diaries

*Task 1R-5R

Audio recordings

*Task 1R & 4R

1. This task excited my curiosity. / このタスクは私の好奇心をくすぐった。

Absolutely true / とても当てはまる	7
True / 当てはまる	6
Somewhat true / どちらかと言えば当てはまる	5
Neutral / どちらともいえない	4
Somewhat untrue/どちらかと言えば当てはまらない	3
Untrue/ 当てはまらない	2
Absolutely untrue / 全く当てはまらない	1

Performing the task was interesting. / タスクを行うことは興味深かった。

Absolutely true / とても当てはまる	7
True / 当てはまる	6

前回、または初めてのタスクと比べると格段に良くなりました。聞く能力については聞き取れないところもありますが、分かったところから内容を推測する能力が高くなりました。話す能力については、初回は自分の文法が合っているか不安で話すことにためらいがありましたが、繰り返すにつれて自分の話していることに自信がもてるようになりました。相手も分かろうとしてくれるので文法が合っているか不安になるよりも積極的に話すべきだと思いました。留学をしたいと考えていますが、今回得られた経験を活かしたいです。

課題としては話しているときに、複雑な文法を使えず、単調な文法で話すことが多かったです。特に関係代名詞、to不定詞などは会話の中で使えるようにしたいです。

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Analysis

(RQ1)

- MANOVA conducted on flow <u>questionnaire</u> scores
 - Within-subjects factor = Initial task performance;
 Repeated task performance
 - Between-group factor = Inter-cultural group; Intracultural group
- Tabulated the number of students "in flow" using a threshold questionnaire score of "5" (out of 7)

(RQ2)

• Independent *t* tests were conducted to test for a significant difference in word and turn counts - adjusted threshold for significance of .025 (.05/2).

(RQ3-4)

 Content analysis of learner <u>diaries</u> to determine the components of flow.

Results

Questionnaires

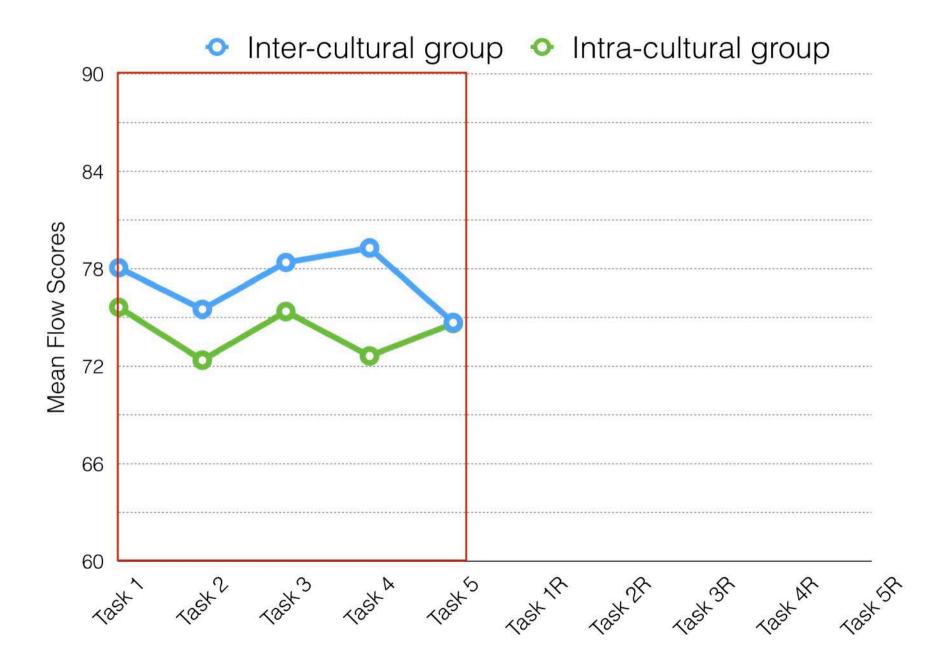
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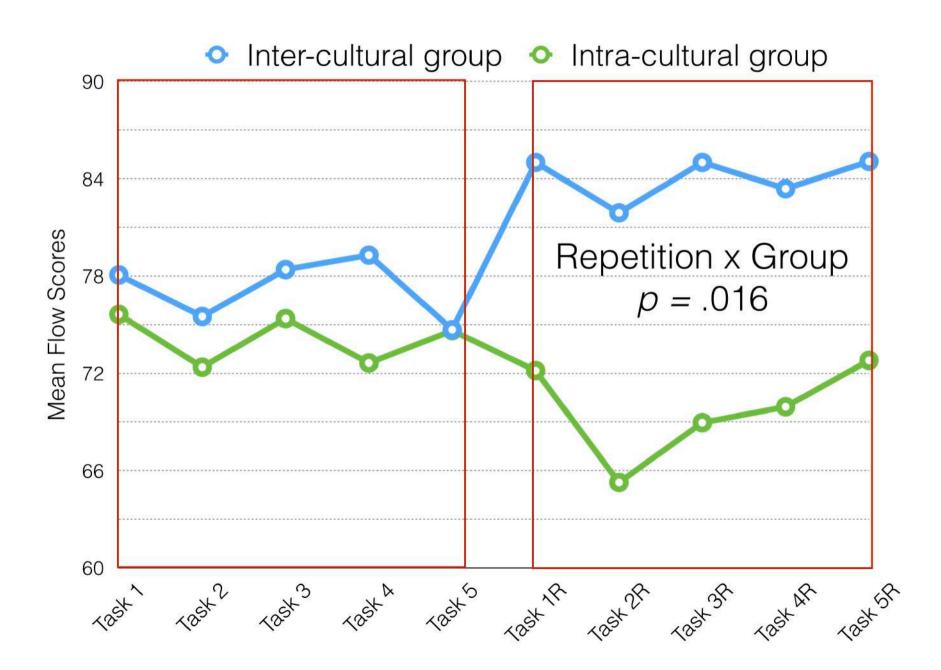
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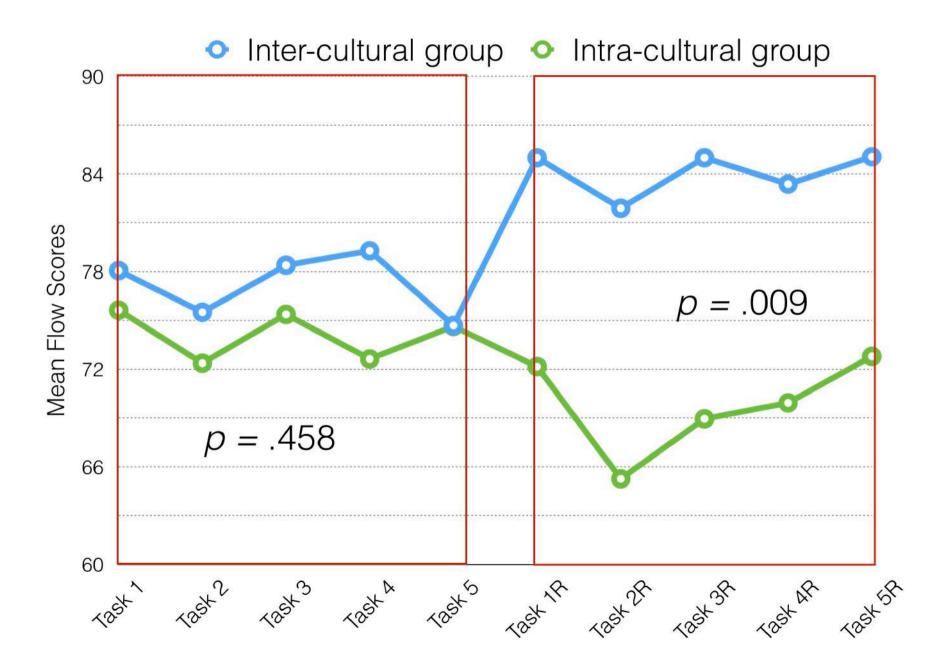
Flow scores



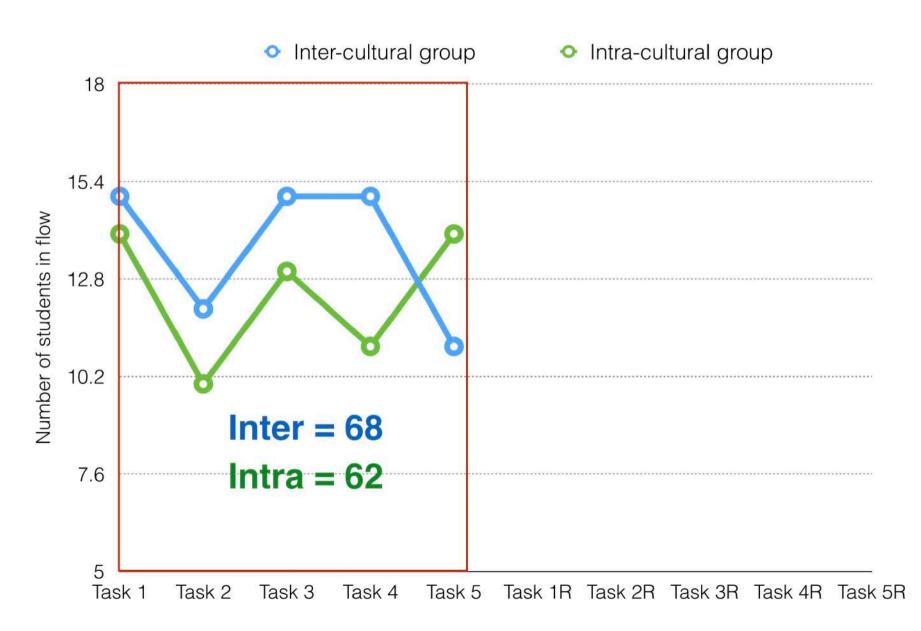
Flow scores



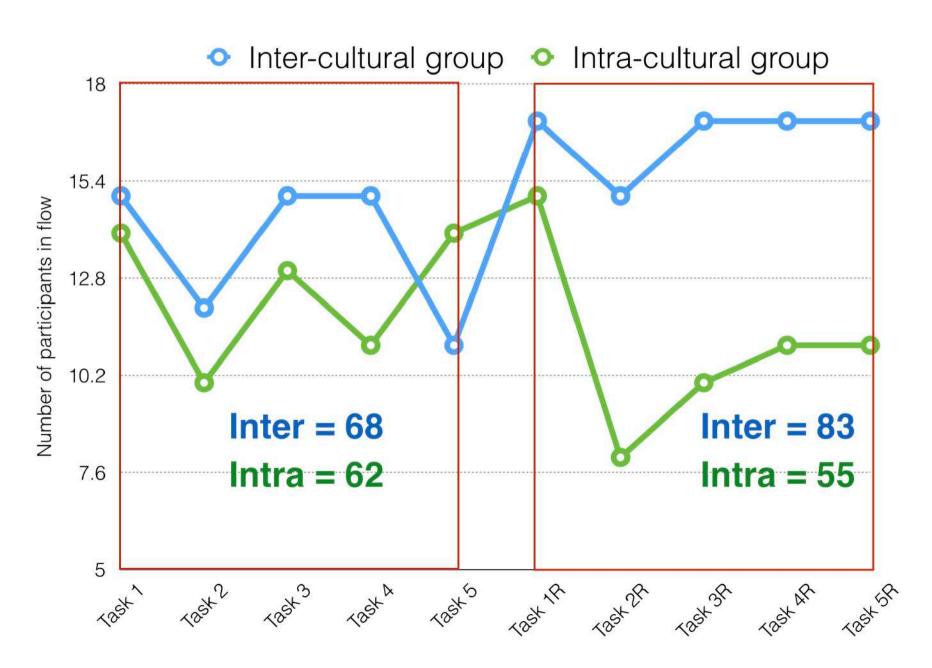
Flow scores



Participants "in flow"



Participants "in flow"



Results

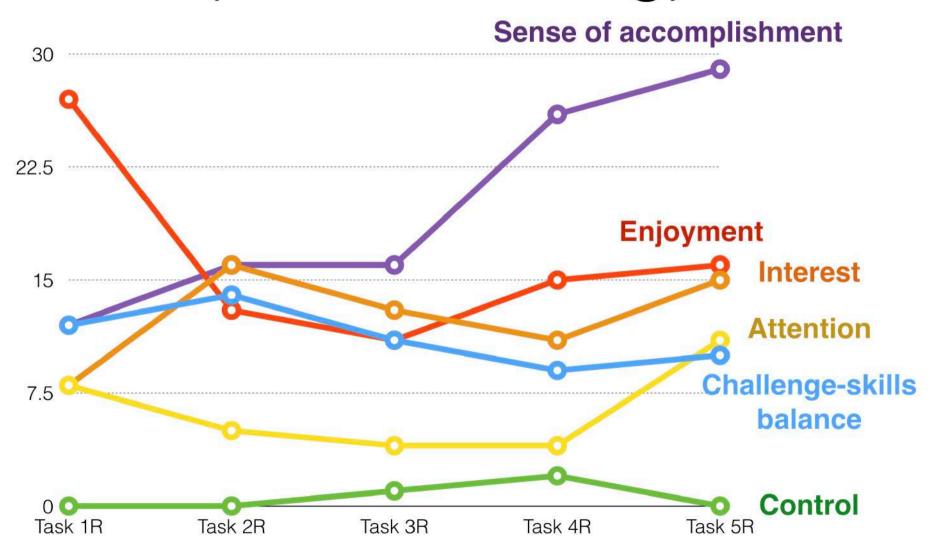
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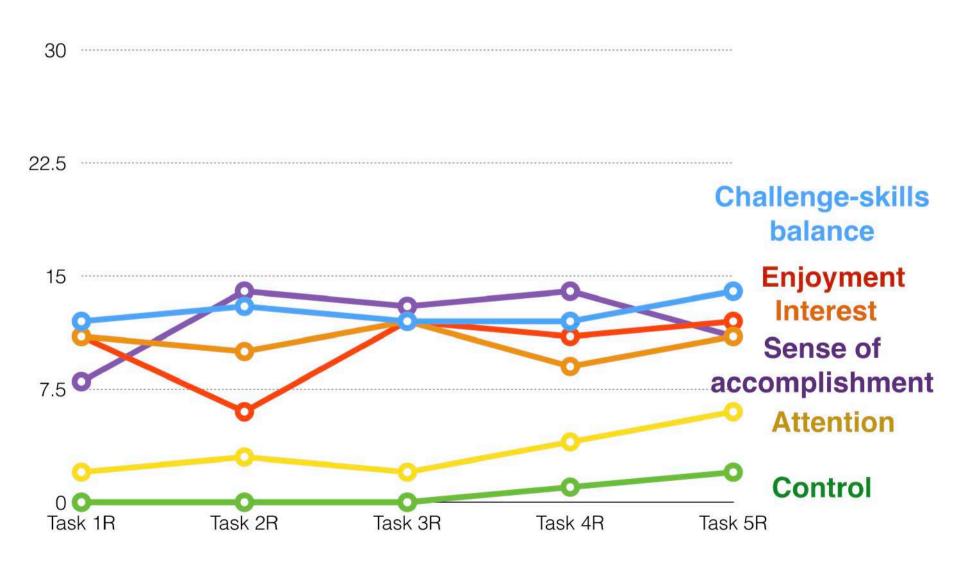
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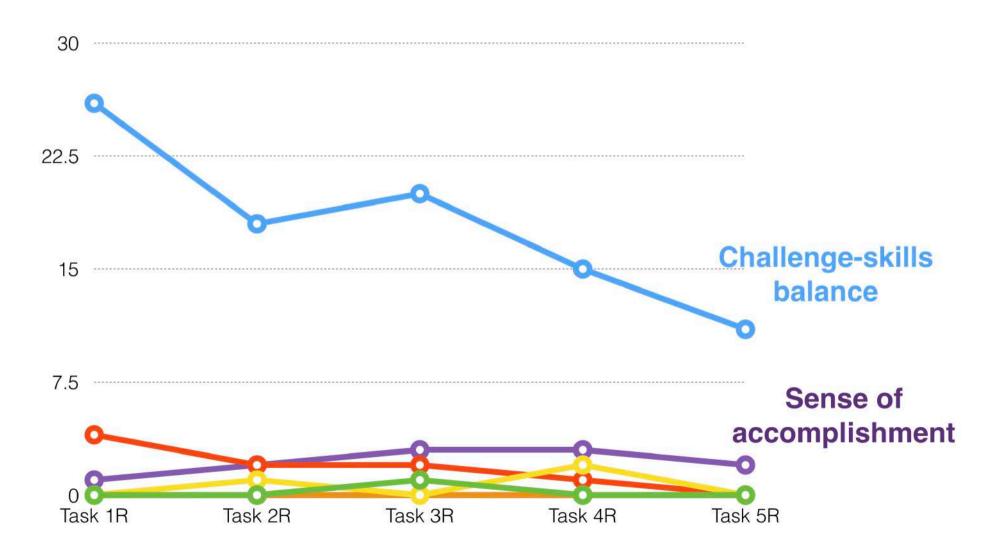
Inter-cultural group (flow enhancing)



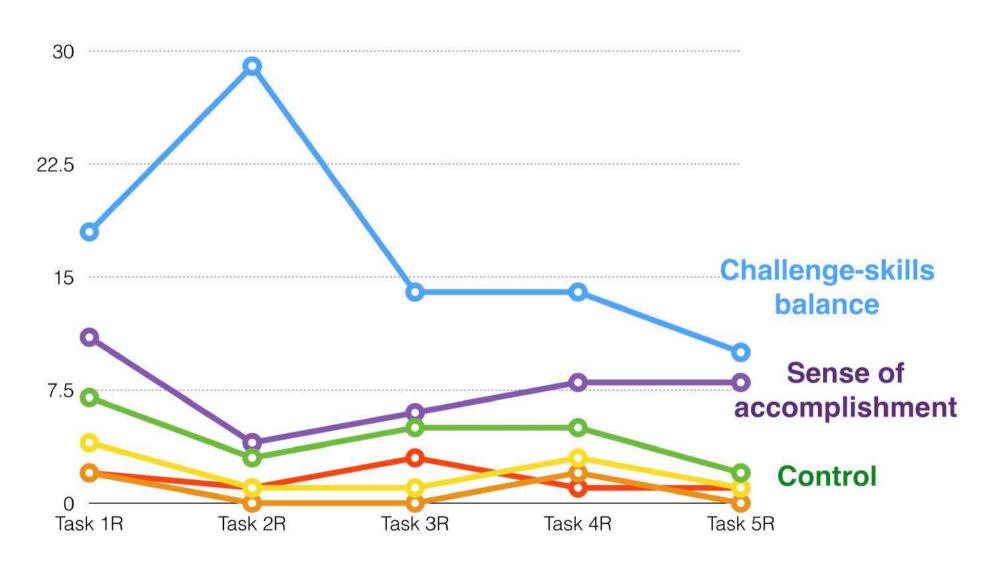
Intra-cultural group (flow enhancing)



Inter-cultural group (flow inhibiting)



Intra-cultural group (flow inhibiting)

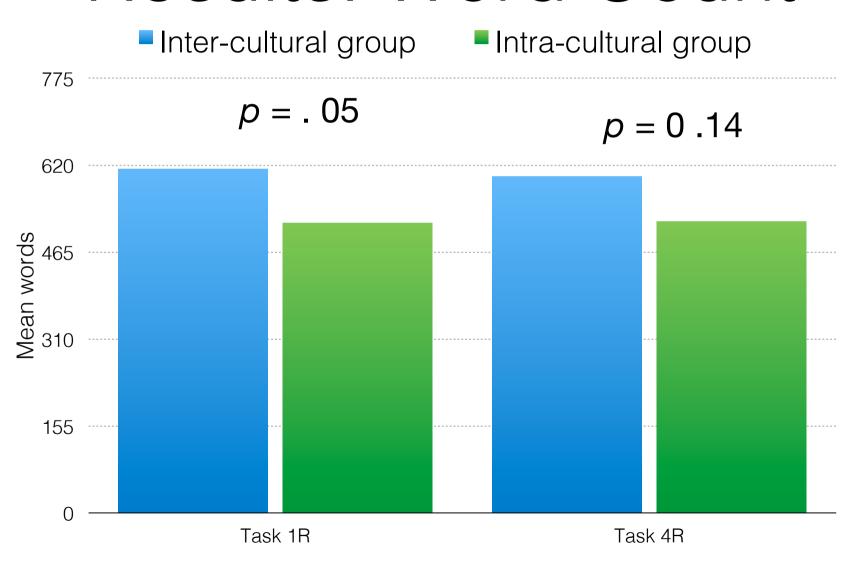


Results

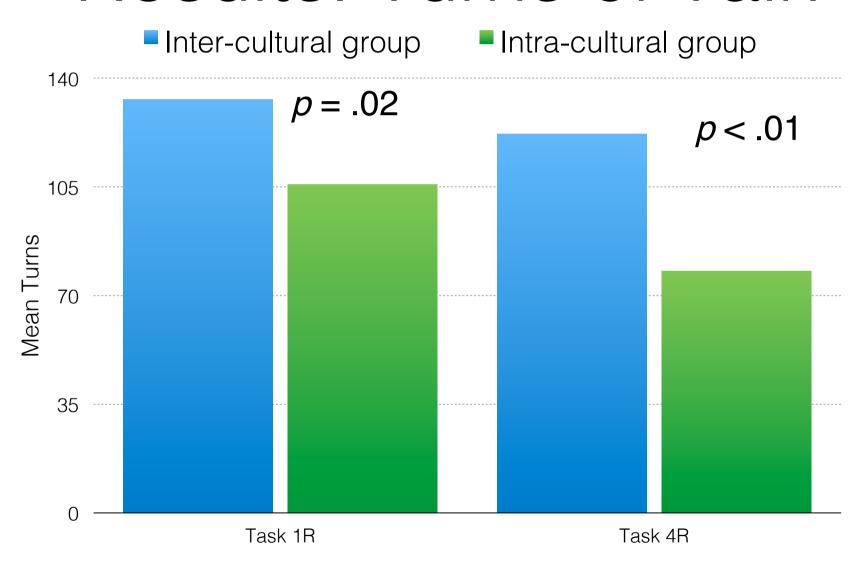
Language production (words & turns)



Results: Word Count



Results: Turns of Talk



Results:

Relationship between flow and words/turns

	Inter-cultural group			Intr	Intra-cultural group			
	Words		Tu	Turns Word		ds	Turns	
	r	p	r	p	r	p	r	p
Flow	.16	.35	.17	.33	15	.39	.39	.03

Main findings

(RQ1) Flow levels:

- negatively affected by task repetition
- offset by the positive effect of inter-cultural contact
- greater in number of "in flow" experiences for the inter-cultural group

(RQ3) Language production:

Inter-cultural contact resulted in significantly more interaction.

(RQ4) Dimensions of flow:

- (1) Challenge-skills balance, (2) Sense of accomplishment, (3) Interest,
 - (4) Enjoyment, (5) Attention, (6) Control

(RQ4) Change in dimensions of flow:

- Inter-cultural contact increasing contribution from sense of accomplishment (flow enhancing)
- Inter-cultural contact decreasing contribution "Challenge-skills balance" (flow inhibiting)

Implications

- Inter-cultural contact could be one way to promote engagement and productive language use - other ways: mixed proficiency pairs, mixed 'knowledge' pairs
- Tasks should be designed to optimize interactivity learnergenerated content, create a knowledge gap
- To facilitate interaction, students may benefit from explicit instruction on using interactional strategies.
- Students tend to lose engagement if the tasks (same content & procedures) are repeated - teachers could vary content
- Cultivate a 'sense of accomplishment' through providing post-task opportunities to evaluate their performance accomplishments

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