ACRITICAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON NEGOTIATION OF MEANING INSECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Negotiation of meaning is generally defined as conversational modifications or adjustments that take place in communicative interactions when learners and their interlocutors experience difficulty in understanding messages. In a conversation, a speaker may employ a communication strategy to communicate effectively using negotiation of meaning. There is a need to examine the impact of negotiation for meaning in classroom interaction and the extent to which negotiation of meaning contribute to L2 learning. This paper reports on a critical review of research conducted on negotiation of meaning strategies used by second language learners in EFL/ESL contexts. Thispaper specifically discusses the ways in which learners of English employ negotiation of meaning strategies in conversation in the studies reviewed. This paper focuses on the functions of negotiation of meaning strategies. This paper concludes by addressing pedagogical implication of negotiation of meaning in second language classrooms.

Key words : negotiation of meaning strategies, second language learning,conversation

1. Introduction

Negotiation of meaning is generally defined as conversational modifications or adjustments that take place in interactions when learners and their interlocutors experience difficulty in understanding messages. In a conversation, a speaker may employ negotiation of meaning strategy to achieve successful communication and to accomplish various functions of language. Negotiation of meaning occurs in everyday interaction as a communication strategy that clarifies meaning to facilitate comprehensible messages. Within the field of SLA, there is a need to examine the impact of negotiation for meaning in classroom interaction and the extent to which negotiation of meaning contribute to L2 learning because"this process of negotiation of meaning has been described as leading language learners to greater awareness of their language and, hence, to further development of language proficiencies" (Ko, Schallert, & Walters, 2003, p. 305). Negotiation of meaning alsogives language learners opportunities to receive comprehensible input and produce comprehensible output. Negotiation of meaning in L2 poses a challenge to the curriculum planners and teachers to provide strategy training in negotiation of meaning. There is a need examine the impact of negotiation for meaning on classroom interaction. There should be investigations on the extent to which negotiation of meaning training contribute to L2 learning.

A number of L2 studies have investigated L2 learners' production of negotiation of meaning. Although these studies have undoubtedly shed light on L2 students' pragmatic knowledge, they are still insufficient to account for their pragmatic competence. Studies about L2 students' performance of discourse phenomena such as how to negotiate meaning are less frequent. Thus, this paper reports on a critical review of research conducted on negotiation of meaning strategies used by second language learners in EFL/ESL contexts. I specifically discuss the ways in which learners of English employ negotiation of meaning strategies in conversation. I critically evaluated reviewed and showed findings from empirical studies some research studies on this topic. In my critical review analysis, I attempt to describethe following: theory being used, types of interaction, types of communicative tasks, proficiency levels of English, and results of the research studies. In this paper,I first discuss background and literature review of negotiation of meaning in SLA from previous research studies. Next, I talk about methodology employed for this study. Then, I explain findings and discussion. Finally, I conclude and propose pedagogical implication for second language classrooms and teachers.

A. Literature Review
1) Negotiation of Meaning in SLA

Negotiation of meaning occurs in everyday interaction as a communication strategy that clarifies meaning to facilitate comprehensible messages. Various theoretical and empirical studies on negotiation of meaning (e.g. Pica & Doughty, 1985) have been carried out. According to Pica (1987) negotiation meaning refers to "activity that occurs when a listener signals to the speaker that the speaker's message is not clear and the speaker and listener work linguistically to resolve this impasse" (p. 200). Richards and Schmidt (2002) argues that "negotiation of meaning happens when interlocutors attempt to overcome problems in conveying their meaning, resulting in both additional input and useful feedback on the learner's own production" (p. 264).

During negotiation, participants work together to arrive at message comprehension using strategies such as comprehension checks, confirmation requests, clarification requests, and repetitions.Negotiation of meaning contributes to learners' language development. According to the interaction hypothesis, negotiation of meaning occurs when second language learners modify their input to ensure that input is modified to exact level of comprehensibility they can manage (Long, 1996). Lengluan (2008) argued that negotiation of meaning can be promoted in an English classroom when the teacher constructs an interactive learning environment with appropriate communication tasks.

Pica (1987) claims that meaning negotiation can help learners accomplish their language learning by helping them make input comprehensible and modify their own output and by providing opportunities for them to access L2 form and meaning. According to the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), interactive negotiation of meaning facilitates comprehension and the development of L2. Long (1996) claims that "negotiation of meaning and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the NS or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition. (pp.451-452). Long (1996) also states that negotiation of meaning benefits comprehension and that negative feedback obtained during negotiation may facilitate L2 development, at least for vocabulary, morphology, and language specific syntax.

Long (1985, 1996) cited in Foster &Ohta (2005) interactional adjustments are the attempts of learners and their conversation partners to overcome comprehension difficulties so that incomprehensible or partly incomprehensible input becomes comprehensible through negotiation meaning. Foster and Ohta (2005) stated that "Negotiation [of meaning] is one of a range of conversational processes that facilitate SLA as learners work to understand and express meaning in the L2" (p. 402).

The interactional social constructivists such as Long (1983a) has indicated that negotiation of meaning is one crucial communication skill that leads to successful classroom interaction. Furthermore, negotiation of meaning assists learners' second language acquisition (SLA) in three principal aspects. Firstly, it helps learners to obtain comprehensible input that is specially modified for their individual circumstances and is a necessary condition for SLA. Particularly, Fuente (2002) argues that negotiation can promote acquisition because it allows learners to understand words and structures beyond their present level of competence and eventually enables them to incorporate them into their L2 production. Secondly, negotiation of meaning also prompts learners to adjust and modify their own output in order to make themselves understood. In this process, learners are "pushed toward the delivery of a message that is not only conveyed, but conveyed precisely, coherently and appropriately" (Swain, 1985, p. 249). Thirdly, negotiation of meaning provides learners with feedback about their attempts at the target language.

During the negotiation process, learners are provided with opportunities to use words and thus receive feedback, which may enable them to notice the discrepancy between the target language and theirs. Negotiation of meaning assists students to overcome comprehension difficulties when students modify their input using clarification request, confirmation checks or comprehension checks on their production (Pica, 1987). The interlocutors engage in negotiation of meaning in order to clarify each other's discourse because they try to achieve mutual understanding.

2) Definitions of the Three C's

The definitions of comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and clarification requests used in this study are the ones defined by Long (1983a, 1983 b) and Pica & Doughty (1985) Long (1983a, 1983 b) defines these by their form and function as follows:

Comprehension checks: 'Any expression by an NS (native speaker) designed to establish whether that speaker's preceding utterance(s) had been understood by the interlocutor. These are typically formed by tag questions, by repetitions of all or part of the same speaker's preceding utterance(s) uttered with rising question intonation, or by utterances like *Do you understand?* Which explicitly check comprehension by the interlocutor'.

Confirmation checks: 'A confirmation check is any expression by the NS immediately following an utterance by the interlocutor which is designed to elicit confirmation that the utterance has been correctly understood or correctly heard by the speaker. Thus *the man?* following*Next to the man* by the other speaker is a confirmation check. Confirmation checks are always formed by rising intonation questions, with or without a tag (*the man? or the man, right?*). They always involve repetition of all or part of the interlocutor's preceding utterance. They are answerable by a simple confirmation (*Yes, Mmhm*) in the event that the preceding utterance was correctly understood or heard, and require no new information from the interlocutor.

Clarification requests refers to "Any expression by an NS designed to elicit clarification of the interlocutor's preceding utterance(s)". Clarification requests are mostly formed by questions, but may consist of wh- or yes–no questions (unlike confirmation checks). Clarification request often require the interlocutor either to provide new information or modify information previously given.

3) Previous Empirical Studies on Negotiation of Meaning

A study conducted by Luciana (2005) on two female Taiwanese native speakers learning English using communicative tasks revealed that negotiation of meaning provided a potentially rich forum for language development, and that the use of embedded negotiation of meaning promotes students' active involvement when engaged in picture based comparison and picture drawing tasks using negotiation of meaning.

Another study conducted by Abdullah (2011) investigated how Indonesian and Chinese international postgraduate students negotiate meaning in English communication. The findings revealed that more than half of the total percentage of negotiation meaning strategies was employed by the students in the information gap activity. The results suggested that "this type of task provided the participants with a greater opportunity for negotiation". They utilized a greater frequency of communication strategies during the interaction. Therefore, it could be concluded that this interaction task stimulated the occurrence of negotiation of meaning.

Samani, et al (2015) investigated types and frequencies of negotiation of meaning in the interaction of Malaysian students as English as a second language learners in computer – mediated communication (CMC). He found 10 types of functions in negotiation of meaning, which are clarificationrequest, confirmation, confirmation check, correction or self-correction, elaboration, elaboration request, replyclarification or definition, reply confirmation, reply elaboration, and vocabulary check. According to the findings of this study, the most - frequently used functions were confirmation, elaboration, and elaboration request and the least frequently used functions were vocabulary check, reply confirmation, and reply clarification. This study revealed that "the proficiency of the participants influences the amount of negotiation for meaning strategies that occur" (p. 16).

Yufrizal (2001) investigated negotiation of meaning among Indonesian learners of English. He specifically investigated which types of tasks stimulate the learners to negotiate meaning. He used information gap, jigsaw, and role play tasks. Results indicate that information gap tasks were more productive than the other two. He argued that "More interaction and negotiations were produced by learners when they were assigned the information gap and jigsaw tasks" (p. 60).

Yi & Sun (2013) investigated whether or not negotiation of meaning is effective in L2 vocabulary acquisition of Chinese learners of English in the classroom setting. Two experimental groups (pre-modified input and negotiation of meaning) and two control groups (pre-modified input). The students were required to do a pre-vocabulary test, a match task and a post-vocabulary test respectively. The experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of comprehensible input in the match task.

Nakahama, Tyler, Lier (2001) investigated how meaning is negotiated in two types of face-to-face interactions between native- English-speaking (NS) and nonnative-English-speaking (NNS) interlocutors using unstructured conversational activity and information gap activity. The results suggest that conversation has the potential to offer substantial learning opportunities at multiple levels of interaction (e.g., discourse management, interpersonal dynamics, topic continuity) even though it offers fewer instances of repair negotiation than information gap activities do.

Ko, Schallert, Walters (2003) study's aim was to determine whether and how the performance of L2 learners of English on a storytelling task could be influenced by a session involving negotiation of meaning that occurred between two tellings of the story. The findings shows that "negotiation of meaning sessions created an opportunity for scaffolding whereby L2 storytellers could elicit feedback and potentially improve the quality of the retelling of their stories" (p. 305).

Jeong (2011) investigated the effects of task type and Group Structure on Meaning Negotiation in Synchronous Computer- Mediated Communication to determine the effect of task type and participant group structure on meaning negotiation in a synchronous text chatting context. He concluded that computer-mediated tasks could provide opportunities for negotiation of meaning. The purpose of the study is to compare the effects of proficiency level on how much negotiation of meaning was produced in the different pairs, and how three different task types affected negotiation (jigsaw, decision-making, and free discussion) by analyzing text-chat quantitatively and qualitatively"(p. 52)

B. Method

The general purpose of this paper is to review empirical studies on negotiation of meaning in SLA. In order to do this, I looked at different empirical studies. In reviewing the articles, I focused on the research studiesthat specifically looked at studies on negotiation of meaning of adults' interaction, in EFL/ESL contexts, in language classroom interaction, with the use of certain communication tasks. In my analysis, I focused on the following aspects: theory being used, types of interaction, types of communicative tasks, proficiency levels of English, and negotiation of strategies employed.

2. Results

A. Types of Communicative Tasks

Task plays an important role in facilitating language acquisition process. Task type is one variable affecting negotiation of meaning. In order to elicit student's interactions, the researchers employ various communicative tasks. There are tasks that stimulate negotiation of meaning. Common communicative tasks may include information gap tasks, jigsaw tasks, decision making task, problem solving task, and opinion exchange task. It is probable that different task types will yield different amount of meaning negotiation. The findings shows that all the research studies used certain communicative tasks to elicit the occurrence of negotiation of meaning in their research. The majority of the studies employed various task types such as role-play tasks, picture based comparison, picture drawing tasks, decision-making task, conversation, game, jigsaw, a match task, shared-information tasks, storytelling tasks, and free discussion activities. Such tasks have been found to generate more opportunities for the learners to negotiate. It was revealed thatinformation gap is the most commonly used task type. Most of the studies reported

that the information gap activity triggered more repair negotiation than any other task types. This finding indicate that information gap interaction triggers more negotiation. For example, task types differently influenced the learning of the two linguistic targets; the one-way information gap task was more effective for learners in the short term than was the decision-making task Choi (2012). Another example is Jeong's study (2011) which revealed that task type affects the quantity of meaning negotiation, and the amount of meaning negotiation is significantly different according to task type.

The current study revealed that information gap has been widely used and useful to facilitate learners' second language acquisition. For instance, Abdullah (2011) also found that information gap activity provided the participants with a greater opportunity for negotiation. Similarly, Yufrizal (2001) investigated which types of tasks stimulate the learners to negotiate meaning. He used information gap, jigsaw, and role play tasks. His findings indicated that "information gap tasks were more productive than the other two. More interaction and negotiations were produced by learners when they were assigned the information gap and jigsaw tasks" (p. 60).Another study also revealed that information gap provided learners with more opportunities to produce more complex utterances. In sum, it can be argued thatinformation gap is a types of task that is most productive andprovides the most opportunities for negotiation of meaning.

B. Types of Interactions

The findings revealed that several studies have examined learners' negotiation of meaning in text-based CMC and face-to-face communication. It is obvious that interactions not only occur in face to face but also in computer-mediated communication. Jeong (2011) asserted that "The concept of interaction has evolved to become more clearly defined as meaning negotiation and its context has been expanded from face to face classroom interaction to possibly more feasible computer-supported interaction and network-based communication."(p. 51). Most of the studies have looked at negotiation meaning in computer mediated communication. For example, Jeong(2011) claimed "Synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) provides an ideal environment for activating interaction and facilitating negotiation of meaning" (p. 52). Another study on negotiation of meaning in Computer mediated communicationis a study by (Yuksel&Inan, 2014) who investigated email interactions among 24 native speaker–nonnative speaker (NS-NNS) dyads with respect to the negotiation structure and strategies followed in asynchronous CMC.

C. English Level Proficiency

In most studies, one of the things that the researchers considered was the level of the proficiency of the participants. Particularly, in pairing NNS-NNS or NS-NNS, English proficiency level of the participant has to

be considered in order to make a fair arrangement to perform a communicative task. Samani, et al(2015) argued that "proficiency of the participants' influences the amount of negotiation for meaning strategies that occur", (p. 16). In this present study, the majority of the studies employed NNS/NNS dyads, NS/NS or NS/NNS pairs." There are many studies that have considered the level of students' English proficiency when conducting their research on negotiation of meaning. Similarly, proficiency level was determined by an essay writing test and a cloze test and students' pairing was preplanned based on their proficiency test score (Jeong, 2011). A pre-test is administered to measure the student's language proficiency (Saeedi, 2013). The participants with the same proficiency levels were paired(Choi, 2012). One study that examined low proficiency students was Bitchener (2004) who found that "low proficiency ESL learners do initiate negotiation routines when they encounter communication difficulties" (pp. 92-93).

D. Theoretical Framework

The majority of the studies used Interaction Hypothesis in explaining negotiation of meaning in SLA. Negotiation has been studied as a subset of Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis in second language acquisition (SLA).Long(1996) argued interactive negotiation of meaning facilitates comprehension and the developments of L2 (second language). Richards & Schmidt (2002) argued :

> "The hypothesis that language acquisition requires or greatly benefits from interaction, communication and especially negotiation of meaning, which happens when interlocutors attempt to overcome problems in conveying their meaning, resulting in both additional input and useful feedback on the learner's own production" (p. 264)

The use of interaction hypothesis in negotiation of meaning studies can be found in Choi's study (2012) on repair negotiation by English L2 learners which gives support for the Interaction Hypothesis.

There are different strategies used by L2 learners in negotiation for meaning during their interactions.In order to base their findings with theory of interaction and negotiation of meaning, theories by Long, Doughty, Pica (1985) are used by many researchers in calculating the amount of negotiation of meaning. In addition, another theory of negotiation of meaning that is frequently used in many of the studies reviewed here is Long's (1996) classification of negotiation devices that interlocutors might employ as they negotiate for meaning during social interaction, such as recasts, repetitions, seeking agreement, reformulations, paraphrasing, comprehension and confirmation checks, clarification requests, and lexical substitutions. The findings show that confirmation, comprehension checks, and clarification requests have been used by many researchers to classify the instances of negotiation of meaning. It was

commonly found that three C's have been used to categorize the instances of negotiation of meaning in interactions.

E. Discussion

The research studies reviewed have indicated that negotiation of meaning has benefited learners in learning a second language regardless whether in face to face or computer-mediated-communication. For example, Ko, Schallert, Walters (2003) found that "negotiation of meaning sessions created an opportunity for scaffolding whereby L2 storytellers could elicit feedback and potentially improve the quality of the retelling of their stories, (p. 303)".In terms of the use of certain communicative tasks, in many studies information gaphas been proven to providethe participants with a greater opportunity for negotiation. For example, Yufrizal's study (2001) indicated that information gap tasks were more productive than the other two (Jigsawand role play tasks). "More interaction and negotiations were produced by learners when they were assigned the information gap and jigsaw tasks" (p. 60). Most studies also indicated that types of functions in negotiation of meaning include clarificationrequest, confirmation, confirmation check, correction or self-correction, elaboration, elaboration request, replyclarification or definition, reply confirmation, reply elaboration, and vocabulary check. In most studies, the most - frequently used functions were comprehension checks, clarification checks, requests. Lee's (2001) study on interaction between non-native speakers (NNSs) and the types of communication strategies employed during the online communication indicated that "Students tended to use more comprehension checks, clarification checks, requests and self-repairs to negotiate with each other."(p. 232).

3. Conclusion, Future Research Direction, and Implication

The primary aim of the study was to review some empirical research on negotiation of meaning in SLA. This study confirms that negotiation of meaning is important in SLA and learners benefit from the process of negotiation for meaning. There have been numerous studies on negotiation of meaning in ESL and EFL contexts. The majority of the studies have examined classroom settings. Shim (2003) stated that "the nature of the classroom environment…enables negotiation processes to be constructive and productive". However, there should be further research on instances of negotiation of meaning in real settings such as family conversations. This present study also revealed that nearly all the studies have examined the instances of negotiation of meaning in both face to face communication and computer mediated communication. In addition, the results of this study suggest that communicative tasks have been used as data collection techniques to elicit the occurrences of negotiation of meaning in interactions. Information gap was the most

frequently used communicative task in most studies. In most studies, commonalities were found in terms of the following aspects: theory being used, types of communicative tasks, proficiency levels of English, and occurrence of negotiation of strategies (results).

Based on the aforementioned results and analyses, this current study supports the idea that second language learners should be encouraged to negotiate for meaning during L2 interactions. Materials for teaching second language can be designed to promote conversational interaction such as by using communicative tasks that allows negotiated interactions. This finding suggests that future studies on should explore more negotiation in both face to face interaction and computer mediated communications with different types of communication tasks that can also include both NNSs and native speakers. Further research can also employ a more comprehensive research methodology such as a longitudinal study. Bitchener (2004) argued that "limited attention has been given to a longitudinal study of the relationship between negotiation and language learning" (p. 81).

From the findings of this study, several pedagogical implications can be drawn. First, the main focus of this study has been on reviewing research on negotiation of meaning in EFL ESL classroom contexts. This study is helpful for teacher to be more aware of the benefits of negotiations of meaning in second language learning process. More importantly, teachers have to carefully design instructional materials that allow students to negotiate meaning during interactions. Another area to explore for future study is the use of communication task, information gap activity. The results of this study suggest that information gap, A spot the difference activity, have been used as data collection techniques to elicit the occurrences of negotiation of meaning in interactions. Information gap is the most frequently used communicative task in most studies. It is advised that the researchers would employ more than one communication tasks in order to see the effects of tasks on participants' performance because the selection of task would affect the result of production of the conversation especially if the researchers are seeking specific features. For further research, it is recommended that the researcher should consider setting the time for completing a task so robust data can be gained and benefit the researcher in terms of the abundance of data for analysis. The use of certain communicative tasks such as information gap, jigsaw tasks, and decision-making tasks would provide students with more opportunities to negotiate meaning. Oliver (1998) asserted that "tasks that promote negotiation for meaning can be undertaken successfully by primary school second language (L2) learners, and provide evidence that there is a valid argument for making use of such pedagogical practice in L2 teaching"(p. 372). Based on the aforementioned results and analyses, this current study supports the idea that second or foreign language learners should be encouraged to have the ability to use communication strategies, for example, strategies to negotiate meaning during interactions.

This study also has implications for the learners of English to be fully informed that communication is organic and it may need some communication strategies so they can convey their meaning effectively. It is important to note that the key to communication is intelligibility and mutual understanding between speakers and interlocutors as long as meaning is mutually achieved, then effective communication already takes place. Learners of English should realize that they can never fully avoid communication breakdowns but there are always tips and strategies to minimize misunderstanding. Therefore, it is essential that learners of English also possess communicative competence.

Furthermore, it should be noted that language proficiency level should be taken into account when the students are paired with another student. In addition, further study could explore the following aspects: theory being used, types of communicative tasks, reasons of each occurrence of negotiation meaning strategies, and non-verbal signals. Communicative activities should be fostered in order to elicit interaction and negotiation of meaning during students' interaction. Negotiation of meaning strategies may facilitate the process of L2 learning. Finally, there is further need to examine how English language learners used negotiation strategies in classroom setting and in real-life settings. The findings have indicated that the majority of the research studies on negotiation for meaning in SLA have been conducted in classroom settings but still rare in the natural setting of a family.

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