Negotiation of Meaning Strategies to Improve English Conversations between EFL University Students and a Native Speaker

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Abstract

Background and Aims: In English conversations, where interlocutors may have differing language backgrounds or proficiency levels, effective communication relies on employing negotiation of meaning strategies to ensure mutual understanding and clarity. The purpose of this study was to examine the negotiation of meaning strategies used by EFL university students in conversation with a native speaker, highlighting their importance in achieving effective communication and linguistic development.

Methodology: Qualitative data were collected through recorded conversations in an academic setting, involving 20 EFL university students and a native speaker and were analyzed using conversation analysis.

Results: The study identified the top five negotiations of meaning strategies, with clarification requests and confirmation checks being most prevalent, indicating a strong preference for direct engagement in ensuring mutual understanding.

Conclusion: The findings emphasized the importance of incorporating targeted negotiation of meaning exercises into EFL curricula in order to improve students' communicative competence and cross-cultural understanding.

Keywords: Negotiation of Meaning Strategy; Clarification Requests; Confirmation Checks; Paraphrasing and Simplifying

กลยุทธ์การเจรจาต่อรองทางความหมายเพื่อเพิ่มทักษะการสนทนาภาษาอังกฤษระหว่างนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยที่พูดภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศและเจ้าของภาษา

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บทคัดย่อ

ภูมิหลังและวัตถุประสงค์: การสนทนาภาษาอังกฤษที่คู่สนทนาอาจจะมีพื้นฐานหรือความสามารถทางภาษาที่ต่างกัน การสื่อสารอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพจำเป็นต้องอาศัยกลยุทธ์การเจรจาต่อรองทางความหมายเพื่อให้เกิดความเข้าใจและความชัดเจนร่วมกันทั้งสองฝ่าย การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษากลยุทธ์การเจรจาต่อรองทางความหมายที่ใช้ในการสนทนาระหว่างนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยที่พูดภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศกับเจ้าของภาษา โดยเน้นถึงความสำคัญของกลยุทธ์นี้ในการบรรลุการสื่อสารที่มีประสิทธิภาพและการพัฒนาทางด้านภาษา

ระเบียบวิธีการวิจัย: การเก็บข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพดำเนินการผ่านการบันทึกการสนทนาในสภาพแวดล้อมเชิงวิชาการระหว่างนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยที่พูดภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ จำนวน 20 คน และเจ้าของภาษา จำนวน 1 คน และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้การวิเคราะห์การสนทนา

ผลการวิจัย: การศึกษาครั้งนี้พบว่ากลยุทธ์การเจรจาต่อรองทางความหมายห้าอันดับแรกที่มีการขอความชัดเจนและการตรวจสอบการยืนยันเป็นสิ่งที่พบมากที่สุดสองอันดับแรกซึ่งจำเป็นอย่างมากสำหรับคู่สนทนาในการสร้างความเข้าใจร่วมกัน

สรุปผล: ผลการวิจัยครั้งนี้ชี้ให้เห็นถึงความสำคัญของการนำกลยุทธ์การเจรจาต่อรองทางความหมายไปใช้ในหลักสูตรการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศเพื่อพัฒนาความสามารถในการสื่อสารและความเข้าใจข้ามวัฒนธรรมของผู้เรียน

คำสำคัญ : กลยุทธ์การเจรจาต่อรองทางความหมาย; การขอความชัดเจน; การตรวจสอบการยืนยัน; การถอดความและการทำให้ง่ายขึ้น

Introduction

Negotiation of meaning is a crucial aspect of language learning, particularly in the context of acquiring English as a second or foreign language. This paper seeks to contribute to the understanding and application of negotiation of meaning strategies in the process of learning English as a second language, with a specific focus on learners in Thailand. By examining the challenges learners face in communication, this study aimed to shed light on how negotiation of

meaning strategies can be effectively utilized to overcome linguistic barriers and enhance language acquisition.

Thailand presents a unique setting for studying language acquisition due to various factors such as linguistic differences, limited exposure to English outside of educational settings, traditional educational methods, and cultural influences. Understanding these challenges is essential for devising effective strategies to facilitate communication and language learning among Thai learners of English. This paper endeavors to explore the complexities of negotiation of meaning strategies within this context and provide insights into its practical applications for language educators and learners alike.

From Long's theory, it is believed that learners of English as a second or foreign language can succeed in communication by using negotiation of meaning strategies when there is a misinterpretation of meaning between the two interlocutors in the communication or conversation (Long, 1983a; Long, 1983b). However, to comprehensively understand communication strategies in this area, it is imperative to consider a broader spectrum of relevant studies and theories. This paper aims to delve into the nuances of negotiation of meaning within the context of learning English as a foreign language, particularly focusing on learners in Thailand. By incorporating insights from various scholarly works, this study not only situates itself within the existing research landscape but also underscores its unique contribution to the field.

It is clear from the above that understanding negotiation of meaning strategies is crucial for instructors as well as learners studying English as a second or foreign language. Because using this strategy will enable the discussion or communication to move forward successfully and accomplish its goal.

Objectives

The purpose of this qualitative research was to examine the negotiation of meaning strategies used by EFL university students in conversation with a native speaker. It is believed that examining negotiation of meaning strategies will contribute to a better understanding of how these strategies improve communication competence, promote cultural sensitivity, facilitate language acquisition, boost confidence, and prepare students for real-world communication challenges.

Literature Review

The concept of negotiation of meaning emerged within the broader field of sociolinguistics and communicative language teaching (CLT). Scholars such as Hymes (1972) emphasized the importance of communication strategies and sociocultural factors in language learning. In addition, Selinker's Interlanguage Theory proposed that language learners develop an interim linguistic system or interlanguage influenced by their native language and the target language environment (Selinker, 1979). Negotiation of meaning was seen as a mechanism through which learners refine their interlanguage. The following is a brief summary of how the field of meaning negotiation has changed over time, starting with significant shifts in research focus like second language acquisition and continuing with the emergence of new paradigms like computer-mediated communication (CMC) and online language learning environments.

In order to help learners comprehend and produce the target language, negotiation of meaning strategies is essential to second language acquisition (SLA). According to Gass and Varonis (1994), negotiation of meaning is the interactive process through which learners and interlocutors clarify and fix communication breakdowns. They argued that negotiation of meaning promotes language development by allowing learners to receive feedback and improve their linguistic knowledge (Gass & Varonis, 1994). This argument is supported by Long (1996), who highlighted the significance of negotiation in modifying the linguistic environment that supports SLA. Long contended that negotiation of meaning encourages students to engage with input, which improves understanding and helps them pick up language structures (Long, 1996; Ellis, 1994).

Pica (1994) divided negotiation strategies into three categories: clarification requests, confirmation checks, and comprehension checks. While confirmation checks aim to verify understanding, clarification requests involve learners asking for clarification or a repeat of ambiguous statements. In order to demonstrate their understanding, learners must rephrase or summarize what they have heard as part of a comprehension check (Pica, 1994). Swain (1985) distinguished between negotiation for form and negotiation for meaning, which gives this taxonomy an additional dimension. While negotiation for form involves discussions regarding grammatical correctness and language structure, negotiation for meaning refers to exchanges meant to settle pragmatic or semantic ambiguities (Swain, 1985). Recent research has broadened the taxonomy of

negotiation of meaning strategies. A thorough framework for classifying negotiation strategies into three categories, clarification, confirmation, and negotiation for form, was proposed by Lai and Zhao (2019). They contended that for negotiation for form strategies, which center on grammatical correctness and language structure, are especially advantageous for language learners' language development (Lai & Zhao, 2019).

According to research, the effectiveness of negotiation of meaning strategies varies based on a number of factors, including the task complexity, communicative context, and learners' proficiency level. Negotiation of meaning strategies are more common and successful in interactions involving challenging or unfamiliar language input (Gass & Varonis, 1994). Additionally, Varonis and Gass (1985) pointed out that negotiation of meaning occurs more frequently in non-native conversations when participants have comparable linguistic backgrounds and experience comparable difficulties learning a language (Varonis & Gass, 1985). This indicates that research has demonstrated the value of negotiating techniques for improving learners' engagement with input and resolving communication breakdowns. In contrast to controlled exercises, Lin and Chin (2021) discovered that negotiation of meaning strategies work better in interactions involving real-world communication tasks. They contended that meaningful opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning and hone their communication skills are offered by authentic tasks (Lin & Chin, 2021).

It is also possible to examine negotiation strategies found in commercial textbooks, such as requests for clarification, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, and self-corrections, to determine how speakers come to a mutual understanding. Mingkwan, Klaisingto, and Teeranon (2022) conducted an analysis of negotiation strategies in English conversations in textbooks and discovered that there were 107 times of negotiation of meaning found in five strategies: 45 times for confirmation checks, 32 times for clarification requests, 21 times for repetitions, 6 times for comprehension checks, and only 3 time for help requests. According to these findings, textbook conversations demonstrate a variety of strategies for negotiation of meaning that vary depending on the communication context, serving as a guide for language instructors. They can incorporate these strategies into their English teaching activities to improve communication, as well as provide a brief training program for L2 learners to improve their English communication skills. In order to improve students' communicative skills, the researchers recommended that future research

should examine the negotiation of meaning strategies in both face-to-face and computer-mediated communications with communicative tasks in L2 students or the authentic interaction (Mingkwan, Klaisingto, & Teeranon, 2022).

Recent research investigated technology-mediated negotiation of meaning in light of the growing integration of technology in language learning. Park and Kim's (2022) study examined how computer-mediated communication aids in language learners' meaning negotiation. They discovered that interactions mediated by technology present special chances for compromise and teamwork, advancing the linguistic growth of students. Interactions mediated by technology provided opportunities for compromise between language learners. Negotiating meaning in a digital environment allowed learners to find common ground and reach agreements on interpretations or solutions. The study also highlighted how computer-mediated communication fostered teamwork among language learners. Collaborative efforts in deciphering meaning or resolving linguistic challenges contributed to the advancement of students' language skills (Park & Kim, 2022). Overall, the findings suggested that computer-mediated communication offers unique opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful interactions, fostering compromise and teamwork, which in turn enhance linguistic growth.

Chen and Sevilla-Pavon (2023) conducted a study on negotiation of meaning via virtual exchange in immersive virtual reality (VR) environments. The findings revealed that English-as-lingua-franca (ELF) learners employed diverse embodied semiotic resources to construct and negotiate meaning effectively in the immersive VR space. Avatar-mediated representations and semiotic modalities facilitated indication, comprehension, and explanation to signal and resolve instances of non-understanding. The study suggests that VR platforms transform social interaction into three-dimensional communication and promote embodied learning (Chen & Sevilla-Pavon, 2023). Mobile devices can also be used to study negotiation of meaning strategies. A study by Lee and Hampel (2023) examined the way individuals negotiate meaning when using mobile phones outside of the classroom. It was found that negotiation of meaning strategies in second language acquisition, focusing on how learners use various semiotic resources to clarify information and engage in word search and lexical negotiation. Through speaking tasks supported by mobile devices outside the classroom, learners utilized public semiotic resources like cafes and museums

to foster meaning negotiation in dyadic interactions. The findings indicate that learners employ a variety of semiotic resources, including embodied and visual cues, to enhance understanding, clarify information, and negotiate lexis during tasks (Lee & Hampel, 2023).

Overall, the field has progressed from its initial focus on sociocultural factors and interlanguage development to encompass a wider array of negotiation strategies, influenced by advancements in technology and changes in communicative environments. Early theoretical frameworks, such as the idea of negotiating meaning rooted in sociolinguistics and communicative language teaching, have laid the groundwork. There has been a notable shift in research emphasis, exemplified by studies aimed at broadening the taxonomy of negotiation strategies. These investigations underscore the significance of negotiation for form strategies in language acquisition. Additionally, new paradigms have emerged, such as technology-mediated negotiation of meaning, signaling further evolution in the field.

Conceptual Framework

Effective communication in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts relies heavily on learners' ability to negotiate meaning during interactions. Negotiation of meaning strategies play a crucial role in facilitating comprehension and resolving communication breakdowns, thereby enhancing communicative competence. While existing literature has extensively explored negotiation strategies in second language acquisition (SLA), there remains a notable research gap concerning the specific application and effectiveness of these strategies within EFL contexts, particularly in relation to communicative competence and interlanguage pragmatics.

Previous studies, such as those by Gass and Varonis (1994), Pica (1994), and Swain (1985), have laid foundational groundwork by categorizing negotiation strategies and highlighting their importance in language learning. These studies have primarily focused on SLA contexts, often within immersive language environments or face-to-face interactions. While valuable insights have been gained from these investigations, they primarily address general principles of negotiation of meaning without delving deeply into the nuances of EFL contexts.

Furthermore, recent research has begun to explore negotiation of meaning in technologically mediated environments, such as computer-mediated communication and immersive virtual reality (VR) settings (Park & Kim, 2022; Chen & Sevilla-Pavon, 2023). These studies shed light on the potential of technology to facilitate negotiation processes and enhance language learning experiences. However, there remains a lack of research specifically focusing on negotiation of meaning strategies in traditional EFL contexts and how these strategies contribute to learners' communicative competence and interlanguage pragmatics development.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining negotiation of meaning strategies in EFL contexts, with a particular emphasis on their role in developing communicative competence and interlanguage pragmatics. By drawing on existing literature and building upon previous research findings, this study seeks to provide new insights into the application and effectiveness of negotiation strategies in EFL contexts. Through a comprehensive analysis of negotiation processes and their impact on language learning outcomes, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of communicative competence development in EFL learners and inform pedagogical practices aimed at enhancing language teaching and learning in EFL contexts.

The conceptual framework for this research is designed to explore the negotiation of meaning strategies between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students and a native speaker as shown in Figure 1 below. It outlines the key concepts (i.e., communicative competence and interlanguage pramatics) under investigation and the expected outcomes (i.e., negotiation of meaning strategies) of the research.
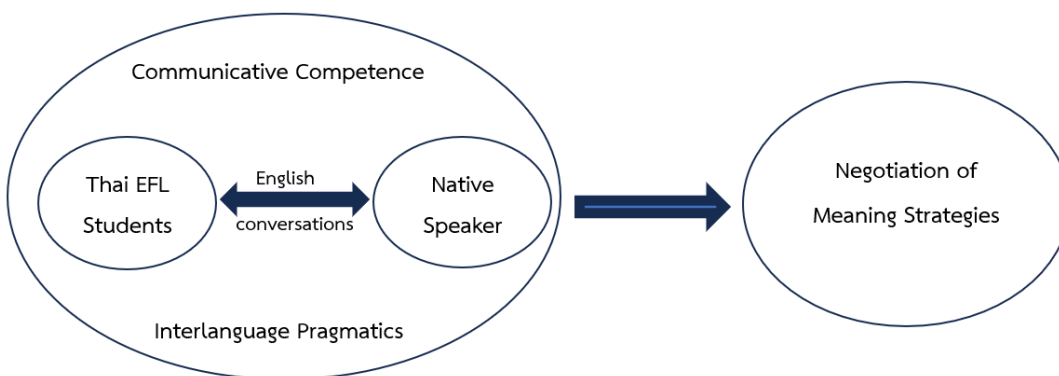
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework for Examining Negotiation of Meaning Strategies in EFL Context

The term "communicative competence," originally used by Dell Hymes in 1972, refers to a person's diverse ability to successfully communicate and understand in a particular language and in a social context. This idea was expanded upon by Canale and Swain (1980), who emphasized the integration of discourse, linguistic, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies. Beyond just knowing how to speak a language, one must also be able to understand cultural norms, adapt to different social contexts, organize ideas logically, and use strategies to break down barriers to communication (Canale & Swain, 1980; Lustig & Koester, 2010). It is essential for effective communication in social, scholarly, professional, and cross-cultural settings. Teachers understand its importance in language learning and teaching, with the goal of developing students' all-around communicative skills. As one's communicative competence increases, they are able to confidently handle challenging communication situations, enabling meaningful interactions and mutual understanding (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980).

Second language acquisition research has given considerable attention to interlanguage pragmatics, a subfield of pragmatics that focuses on how second language learners pick up and apply pragmatic knowledge (Kasper & Rose, 2002). It investigates how language learners acquire pragmatic competence in a second language, including how well they comprehend speech acts, manners, and sociocultural norms that influence language use (Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011). The field of interlanguage pragmatics recognizes that learners frequently apply pragmatic norms from their first language (L1) to their interlanguage, which can result in successful or unsuccessful pragmatic transfer. Interlanguage pragmatics develops as a result of a variety of factors that researchers have found influence the process, including learners' proficiency level, time spent in the target language, and opportunities for interaction with native speakes (Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011; Kasper & Rose, 2002). Through examining interlanguage pragmatics, academics aim to improve our comprehension of how learners manage communicative difficulties in their interactions with second languages and gradually acquire pragmatic competence.

Individuals who possess a strong foundation in communicative competence are better equipped to handle a variety of communication situations. Comprehending cultural norms and adjusting to various social settings are fundamental elements of effective communication. High communicative competence individuals can use their understanding of language and

sociolinguistic norms to ensure mutual understanding when they are negotiating meaning. They are able to effectively communicate by using the right strategies to understand the intentions of those they are speaking with and effectively communicate their own message. By emphasizing learners' acquisition and application of pragmatic knowledge in their interactions with second languages, interlanguage pragmatics helps to negotiate meaning strategies. Language learners can successfully negotiate meaning by appropriately interpreting speech acts, comprehending implied meanings, and modifying their communication style to fit the situation by having a solid understanding of pragmatic norms and conventions. Learners' strategies for negotiating meaning are also informed by their awareness of pragmatic transfer from their first language, as they aim to match their communicative behavior with the standards of the second language community. In essence, interlanguage pragmatics improves learners' comprehension of pragmatic aspects specific to their second language context, while communicative competence offers the fundamental knowledge and abilities required for successful communication. Collectively, these ideas influence and shape negotiation of meaning strategies, helping individuals overcome communication challenges and have productive conversations in a second language.

Methodology

This qualitative research aimed to examine the negotiation of meaning strategies used by EFL university students in conversation with a native speaker. Twenty conversations between year 1-3 Business English majors and an American employee in charge of the Business English Smart Corner (BESC) at Internal College, Uttaradit Rajabhat University for the second semester of the 2022 academic year were used for data collection. To have productive conversations with a native speaker, the student participants were free to choose topics based on their own interests as shown in Table 1 below. Allowing participants to choose their own topics was a strategic decision aimed at fostering a naturalistic conversational environment. By empowering participants to select topics that resonate with them, the researcher aimed to elicit genuine engagement and spontaneous dialogue reflective of real-life interactions. This approach not only enhances the reliability and validity of the study but also encourages participants to express themselves authentically, potentially yielding richer and more diverse data. Clear guidelines and instructions

were provided to participants outlining the overarching themes or objectives of the study. This served as a framework within which participants could navigate their topic choices, ensuring alignment with the study's goals. For a native speaker, to ensure consistency and minimize bias in the interactions across all conversations, rigorous preparation protocols were implemented. This included discussions on maintaining neutrality, avoiding leading questions or comments, and refraining from imposing personal opinions or biases onto the discussions. The data were analyzed using conversation analysis (CA). It focuses on the systematic analysis of naturally occurring spoken interaction in order to better understand conversation's structure, organization, and function related to negotiation of meaning strategies. It sheds light on how participants collaborate to manage interactional tasks, establish social relationships, and negotiate meaning in face-to-face communication. The steps of CA include data collection, transcription, initial familization, coding, analysis of sequential organization, identification of interaction patterns, emergent themes and patterns, refinement and interpretation, and presentation of findings.

The face-to-face conversations were audio recorded by the researcher. The researcher had to ensure that the conversations were held in a comfortable environment before starting each one. The information provided in the Participant Information Form and Consent Form for the URU research project was shared with all participants. Prior to each conversation, each participant was informed that all answers would be kept confidential and anonymous. All audio recordings were then transcribed after all the conversations were finished.

The participant's consent was obtained by the researcher before any conversation started. An information sheet explaining the study and the consequences of participating was given to each participant. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, as the information sheet made clear. During the conversation, participants were free to avoid discussing any topic or withdraw from participation at any moment without consequence. The participants were also informed that their decision to participate or not had no impact on how they would relate to the program going forward, the courses they were taking or were in charge of, or any assessments. As a result, the discussion did not start until consent was granted.

Table 1 Conversation Topics

Conversation	Topic	Year/Gender	Duration (hrs.)
1	Work culture difference between Thailand and USA	3/Female	44.30
2	Favorite movies	3/Male	26.12
3	Tourist attractions that you've visited and want to share	3/Female	26.35
4	Coffee	1/Female	10.15
5	My home country	1/Female	10.17
6	Interaction with others	1/Female	10.18
7	Making notes	1/Female	10.00
8	Favorite Foods	1/Female	10.24
9	Online News	1/Female	11.07
10	Where you Live	1/Female	10.12
11	Work	1/Male	10.32
12	Chores	1/Female	10.08
13	Sports and Games	1/Male	10.14
14	Shopping	1/Female	10.01
15	Tourist attraction	2/Female	10.20
16	How to learn English by yourself	2/Female	10.32
17	Reading Books	2/Female	09.54
18	Being a hotel receptionist	2/Female	10.14
19	How to be a good teacher	2/Female	10.17
20	Job Interview (get ready before work)	2/Female	10.23

Results

The research objective was to examine the negotiation of meaning strategies used by EFL university students in conversation with a native speaker, and conversation analysis was employed

to achieve this objective. Detailed steps of conversation analysis consist of *data collection*: conversations are typically recorded either through audio or video recordings, or through transcripts of conversations; *transcription*: conversations are transcribed verbatim, capturing all verbal utterances as well as non-verbal elements such as pauses, overlaps, intonation, and gestures; *initial familiarization*: the researcher become familiar with the data by repeatedly listening to or reading the transcripts; *coding*: the researcher uses coding strategies to systematically analyze the data and can be done using various techniques, such as line-by-line coding, focused coding on specific themes, or open coding to allow for emergent themes; *analysis of sequential organization*: CA pays close attention to the sequential organization of talk, focusing on how turns-at-talk are constructed and managed by participants; *identification of interactional patterns*: the researcher identifies interactional patterns within the data, including how participants initiate, sustain, and terminate interactions, as well as how they signal agreement, disagreement, understanding, or misunderstanding; *emergent themes and patterns*: through systematic analysis, researchers identify emergent themes and patterns within the data; *refinement and interpretation*: the researcher refines his analysis through iterative cycles of coding and interpretation; and *presentation of findings*: the findings of the analysis are presented in a coherent and systematic manner, often through written reports or academic publications. Table 2 below lists the negation of meaning strategies based on an analysis of 20 conversations between an English native speaker and EFL students.

Table 2 Negotiation of Meaning Strategies Demonstrated by ELF Students and Native Speaker

Negotiation of Meaning Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Clarification Requests	42	24.56
Confirmation Checks	33	19.30
Repetition for Clarification	19	11.11
Cultural Explanations	12	7.02
Paraphasing and Simplifying	11	6.43
Seeking Examples	9	5.27
Visual Explanation	7	4.09

Negotiation of Meaning Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Language Learning Practice	6	3.51
Open-Ended Questions	6	3.51
Recasts	5	2.92
Elaboration	4	2.34
Guessing from Context	4	2.34
Metalinguistic Cues	4	2.34
Positive Feedback	4	2.34
Empathy and Active Listening	3	1.75
Self-Repair	2	1.17
Total	171	100

The results in Table 1 show the negotiation of meaning strategies demonstrated by EFL university students and a native speaker. The strategies were used 171 times to build mutual understanding among the participants. The top five meaning negotiation strategies were confirmation requests (42 times, 24.56%), confirmation checks (33 times, 19.30%), clarification repetition (19 times, 11.11%), cultural explanation (12 times, 7.02%), and paraphrasing and simplifying (11 times, 6.43%). Each theme contains quote examples, and followed by the researcher's analysis.

Clarification requests entails expressing the need for more information when something is unclear. It's a method of looking for more details to help understand a concept or message. The following are some examples of the strategy used in conversations.

● "Could you please clarify what you meant by that?" This quote is a clear example of a request for clarification. The speaker is asking the other person to explain or elaborate on something they said that was unclear or ambiguous. This strategy helps ensure mutual understanding in the conversation.

● "Use for?" This appears to be a shortened form of the question "What is it used for?" or "What is the purpose?" The speaker is seeking clarification about the purpose or function of something mentioned in the conversation. However, it's a bit informal and might benefit from a more complete phrasing for clarity.

- *"Do you know Harrison Ford?"* This question seems straightforward, but it could also be a subtle way of introducing a topic or gauging the listener's familiarity with a particular person. Depending on the context, the speaker may be seeking clarification on the listener's knowledge or simply starting a conversation about Harrison Ford.

- *"You want to share with me?"* This quote is a request for clarification regarding the listener's intentions. The speaker is asking if the listener wants to share something with them, but it could also imply a deeper meaning depending on the context of the conversation. The speaker may be seeking clarification on whether the listener wants to share information, emotions, or something else.

- *"Chinese attention or tourist attention?"* This quote is a clarification request aimed at distinguishing between two types of attention: attention from Chinese individuals and attention from tourists. The speaker is seeking clarity on which type of attention the listener is referring to or which type is being discussed in the conversation.

Confirmation checks are used to ensure comprehension by confirming that one's interpretation or understanding of a message is correct. It guarantees both parties are on the same page. Examples of this strategy are as follows.

- *"You know what I'm talking about"* This statement can serve as a confirmation check where the speaker is seeking validation from the listener that they share a mutual understanding of the topic being discussed. By assuming the listener's familiarity with the topic, the speaker is indirectly asking for confirmation of their comprehension without explicitly seeking it.

- *"So, if I understand correctly, you're suggesting…"* the speaker is explicitly seeking confirmation of their understanding of the other person's suggestion or idea. By restating what they believe the other person is suggesting and asking for validation, the speaker is engaging in a confirmation check to ensure they have interpreted the information accurately.

- *"Which sport do you enjoy? Watch on TV."* This quote seems to be an incomplete question, possibly intending to ask about the listener's preferred sport to watch on television. However, the lack of proper punctuation makes it unclear. If properly phrased, it could

serve as a confirmation check by seeking validation of the listener's preference in watching sports on TV.

● "Right?" This is a straightforward confirmation check commonly used in conversation. By appending "right?" to a statement or question, the speaker seeks confirmation or agreement from the listener. It serves as a quick way to ensure mutual understanding and agreement on a particular point.

● "You know what he did?" This question assumes that the listener is aware of a particular action or event involving someone else. The speaker is seeking confirmation of the listener's knowledge or understanding. However, it could also function as a clarification request if the speaker suspects the listener may not be familiar with the event and wants to provide more information.

Repetition for clarification includes reiterating a statement or question to gain clarity or ensure comprehension. This repetition can help reinforce important points or indicate the need for additional explanation. Here are some strategies used in this study.

● "And more practice means you get better and better and better and better if you don't practice, you can't get better." This quote emphasizes the importance of repetition for improvement. By repeating "better" multiple times, the speaker underscores the idea that consistent practice leads to continuous improvement. This repetition serves to clarify and reinforce the main point of the statement, highlighting the significance of practice in skill development.

● "Let me make sure I got this right – you're saying…" The speaker is using repetition as a clarification strategy to confirm their understanding of what the other person is saying. By restating the idea in their own words and seeking confirmation, the speaker ensures clarity and accuracy in comprehension. This repetition helps to avoid misunderstandings and promotes effective communication.

● "They say 40 hours is the normal work week. Anything that you work extra, you get time. Plus 1/2." In this quote, repetition is used to reinforce and clarify the information being conveyed. By repeating the concept of "time" twice, the speaker emphasizes the idea that any

extra hours worked beyond the standard 40-hour work week will be compensated with additional time off, plus half. This repetition aids in comprehension and ensures that the listener grasps the key points of the statement.

● "He did something for the Thai people" This statement uses repetition to emphasize the target audience or beneficiary of an action. By repeating "the Thai people," the speaker clarifies and reinforces who the action was directed towards. This repetition helps to avoid ambiguity and ensures that the listener understands the specific group or community being referenced.

● "You go talk to him. Maybe the group, the team comes at lunch." Repetition is used to clarify the potential scenario being described. By repeating "the group, the team," the speaker emphasizes the possibility that both groups may arrive during lunchtime. This repetition helps to reinforce the idea and ensures that the listener understands the potential outcome of the situation.

Cultural explanations provide information about cultural contexts or norms that may affect comprehension. This can help bridge cultural differences and improve comprehension among speakers. Below are some examples of the strategy.

● "In America, you get in trouble for being late right there." This quote provides a cultural explanation by suggesting that in American culture, being late is frowned upon or may have consequences. The speaker is likely offering this explanation to help the listener understand the cultural norms and expectations regarding punctuality in the United States. By contextualizing behavior within a cultural framework, the speaker facilitates understanding and communication.

● "Tial vacation with your family for some grind?" This quote seems to contain a cultural reference that may not be immediately clear to the listener. The term "grind" could refer to hard work or labor, and the phrase "Tial vacation" might be a cultural reference specific to a certain community or context. The speaker may be using this phrase to evoke a cultural concept or tradition that requires further explanation for the listener to understand fully.

● "You have a saying for that in Thai." The speaker acknowledges the existence of a

cultural saying or expression in Thai language that encapsulates a particular concept or idea. By highlighting the presence of cultural idioms or proverbs, the speaker invites the listener to consider the cultural context and offers an opportunity for further exploration or explanation of Thai culture and language.

- "Yes, Thai people, Thai people usually is late. Usually are late." This quote provides a cultural explanation by suggesting that lateness is a common trait or behavior among Thai people. The speaker is offering this explanation to help the listener understand a cultural norm or pattern of behavior within Thai society. By providing insight into cultural practices, the speaker promotes cross-cultural understanding and effective communication.

- "English tea-drinking habits are originated in China." This quote offers a cultural explanation by tracing the origins of English tea-drinking habits back to China. The speaker is providing historical and cultural context to explain the adoption of certain practices or customs in English culture. By highlighting the cultural exchange and influence between China and England, the speaker enhances understanding of the cultural background behind tea-drinking traditions.

Paraphrasing and simplifying are used to restate information in different words or to simplify complex concepts for easier understanding. It's a way to make the message more understandable to improve mutual understanding. The following are examples provided by participants.

- "My town is famous for rice." In this quote, the speaker paraphrases and simplifies the idea that their town is renowned for its rice production. By expressing the main concept concisely, the speaker makes the information more accessible and easier to understand. Paraphrasing in this way helps ensure clarity and facilitates effective communication.

- "In other words, you're suggesting that.. " This phrase signals the speaker's intention to paraphrase or rephrase the previous statement for clarification. By offering an alternative formulation, the speaker aims to simplify the idea and ensure mutual understanding. Paraphrasing in this manner helps to clarify complex concepts and promote clearer communication.

- "OK, time is being on. Time is very important." This quote simplifies the concept

of time management by emphasizing its importance. By stating that "time is being on," the speaker simplifies the idea that time is a crucial factor. Simplifying complex ideas into straightforward statements helps to clarify key points and ensure comprehension.

● "To be short, chat information." The speaker simplifies and condenses the idea of providing concise information by stating 'chat information'. This phrase simplifies the concept of brevity and emphasizes the importance of conveying information succinctly. Simplifying complex ideas into brief, easily digestible statements facilitates understanding and promotes effective communication.

● "'Self-help' for 'improve yourself.'" This quote simplifies the meaning of 'self-help' by offering a clarification or paraphrase: 'improve yourself'. By providing a simplified definition, the speaker aims to enhance understanding and clarify the concept of self-help. Simplifying terminology in this way helps to make concepts more accessible and facilitates clearer communication.

In addition to the top five negotiation of meaning strategies listed above, some additional strategies have been discovered to assist students and a native speaker in reaching a better understanding and engaging in successful conversations. Seeking examples, visual explanations, and language learning practice were discovered among them. Seeking examples means requesting examples or illustrations to help clarify abstract concepts or ideas. Examples can help make concepts more concrete and easier to understand, such as ""Can you ask the question differently?", "They also say if you work holiday, let's say it's Songkran...", and "Examples of specific movies like Gladiator and Shawshank Redemption." For visual explanations, they involve using visual aids like diagrams, pictures, or gestures to clarify concepts or ideas. Visual explanations can supplement verbal explanations and improve comprehension, such as "There's two types of work. One is salary... Or direct deposit, you know, direct deposit." Participants also used Google to look up images to help them better understand the topic being discussed. In terms of language learning practice, a native speaker participant demonstrated student participants how to pronounce words like "this" and "that" in order to improve mutual understanding.

In terms of language and culture, participants used metalinguistic cues, or the use of language to talk about language, to help them reflect on and analyze language usage, such as

discussing word meanings, grammar rules, or pronunciation during conversations. Understanding cultural naunces among participants may also help them gain a better understanding of the different cultural contexts being discussed. In other words, participants used metalinguistic cues, such as asking for the correct word form or sentence structure. This includes discussions about language in order to improve comprehension. The conversations may include discussions about the geographical location of the participants' hometowns and their famous products, demonstrating cultural awareness.

Discussion

The results of the research offer insightful information about the meaning-negotiation techniques used in conversations. They provide a variety of strategies employed by the participants to promote comprehension and overcome language challenges. These strategies cover a wide range of approaches, from asking for clarification to offering cultural explanations; they are indicative of the dynamic characteristics of communication and the various methods people use to close gaps in understanding. The high number of requests for clarification in the results emphasizes how crucial it is to look for more information in order to clear up confusion and address ambiguity. This result is consistent with earlier studies (e.g., Gass & Varonis, 1984; (Mingkwan, Klaisingto, & Teeranon, 2022) that showed how important clarification is to promoting successful communication. Participants show that they are proactive in addressing comprehension issues by actively seeking clarification, which facilitates clearer communication.

Confirmation checks and repetition also appeared as common strategies for negotiation of meaning. Confirmation checks indicate participants' attempts to confirm mutual comprehension and confirm understanding. This result is consistent with research (e.g., Pica et al., 1989; (Mingkwan, Klaisingto, & Teeranon, 2022) that highlights the role confirmation strategies play in fostering shared understanding. By asking for confirmation, participants make sure that their understandings are aligned, which lowers the possibility of misunderstandings and improves communication effectiveness overall. For repetition, it is frequently used to emphasize points and indicate when more information is needed, which highlights its value as a technique for doing so. According to research showing its role in promoting comprehension (e.g., Long, 1983; (Mingkwan,

Klaisingto, & Teeranon, 2022), repetition is a useful tool for highlighting important information and encouraging additional explanation.

Cultural explanations and paraphrasing and simplifying are another important strategies found in this research. Cultural explanations strategy reflects participants' awareness of the influence of cultural factors on communication. This finding underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in intercultural communication contexts (e.g., Lustig & Koester, 2010). By providing cultural explanations, participants seek to bridge cultural gaps and foster mutual understanding, highlighting the integral role of cultural competence in effective communication. The prevalence of paraphrasing and simplifying further highlights the significance of clarity and accessibility in communication. Paraphrasing and simplification enable participants to convey complex ideas in a more digestible format, enhancing comprehension and reducing cognitive load. This finding aligns with research emphasizing the efficacy of simplified language in promoting understanding (e.g., Ellis, 1994).

Overall, the results emphasize the value of using a variety of strategies to promote successful communication and advance the understanding of the negotiation of meaning process. This study highlights the importance of developing communicative competence and cultural awareness in language learners and communicators alike by clarifying the strategies used by participants and providing useful implications for language instruction and intercultural communication.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, future research recommendations could be made to investigate these meaning negotiation strategies. First, *clarification requests,* future research should explore the frequency, effectiveness, and preferred forms of clarification requests in various communication contexts. Investigating factors such as participants' language proficiency, familiarity with the topic, and cultural backgrounds can offer insights into when and how clarification requests are utilized, contributing to a deeper understanding of their role in effective communication. Second, *confirmation checks,* further investigation is warranted to examine the use of confirmation checks in different linguistic and cultural settings. Research could focus on identifying the specific types

of confirmation checks employed, their frequency, and their impact on the clarity and accuracy of communication. Additionally, exploring how speakers interpret and respond to confirmation checks can provide valuable insights into their communicative functions. Third, *repetition for clarification*, research should delve into the role of repetition for clarification in facilitating mutual understanding in communication. Studying when and why speakers resort to repetition, as well as its effectiveness in resolving misunderstandings, can enhance our understanding of this strategy. Moreover, investigating variations in repetition patterns across languages and cultures can illuminate cultural influences on communication strategies. Fourth, *cultural explanation*, future studies could examine how cultural explanations are utilized in intercultural communication to bridge cultural gaps and enhance mutual understanding. Investigating the effectiveness of cultural explanations in different cultural contexts and their impact on communication outcomes can provide valuable insights into cross-cultural communication strategies. Additionally, exploring the role of cultural sensitivity in delivering and receiving cultural explanations can inform intercultural communication practices. Lastly, *paraphrasing and simplifying*, further research is needed to explore the use of paraphrasing and simplifying techniques in facilitating comprehension and negotiation of meaning. Examining the effectiveness of different paraphrasing and simplification strategies, such as linguistic simplification and use of analogies, in various communication contexts can offer practical insights for language teaching and intercultural communication training. Additionally, investigating individual preferences for specific paraphrasing and simplification techniques can inform personalized communication interventions.

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