

TEACHER'S NEGOTIATION OF MEANING STRATEGIES IN AN INDONESIAN TRAINING COLLEGE ESP CLASSROOM

Marlina

marlinavirtue@gmail.com

State University of Makassar

Murni Mahmud

State University of Makassar

Kisman Salija

State University of Makassar

ABSTRACT

The research was to reveal the negotiation of meaning strategies used by teacher in an Indonesian ESP classroom interaction. It employed a single-case study design and was conducted at a training college for cruise ship worker candidates based in Makassar, Indonesia. The subject was picked through purposive sampling technique, and the data were obtained through observation and semi-structured interview. The findings show that the teacher could not avoid using the five negotiation of meaning strategies proposed by Pica (1994) and Long (1996); request for message clarification, confirmation, repetition, elaboration and simplification. The findings also elucidate that the teacher's use of the negotiation of meaning strategies was mostly due to the students' relatively low level of English. Thus, it can be inferred that the teacher used the negotiation of meaning strategies as communication strategies in the ESP classroom.

Key Words; *Negotiation of Meaning Strategies, ESP Classroom*

A. Background

Foster and Ohta (2005) have proposed that EFL Classroom interaction, through which the students can effectively acquire the world's most widely-used language, is naturally a social event in the learning process with the teacher and the students as its participants; it is definitely built by both sides. This obviously implies that the interaction will never happen if any of the two sides is unresponsive. From here, we can see that ideally, an EFL classroom is a class of active students and a linguistically, communicatively and socially competent teacher. While the teacher as the class manager is demanded to initiate and maintain the interaction, the students are supposed to be responsive.

Like other social interactions, EFL classroom interaction is vulnerable to misinterpretation (Stevens, 1999). It is so possible that the teacher's utterances are misunderstood by the students, and vice versa, particularly when both sides practice communicating their ideas in the target language. The misunderstanding may be due to the teacher's language, which is still too complicated for the students to understand, or the students' language, which is still too improper for the teacher to comprehend. Accordingly, the classroom interaction always needs meaning negotiation.

In the context of EFL classroom interaction, negotiation of meaning is needed to avoid and overcome misunderstanding between the teacher and students or between students (Foster, 1998; Storch, 2002). Ideally, what the students catch from what the teacher says is exactly what the teacher means by it, and vice versa. If this does not happen, clarification through negotiation of meaning would be the effective solution (Aston, 1986; Swain, 1998). When, for instance, knowing that the students do not really understand what he means by "*frankly*", the teacher can do some meaning negotiations by providing the synonym of the adverb such as "*honestly*", which the students are more familiar with. Or, another instance, when realizing the mistake they make in their speaking to the teacher, the students can clarify their point by repeating the expression in its correct form.

Exploring negotiation of meaning in EFL teaching and learning process is not a "new song", but it is never too old to "sing". Worajittiphon (2011), Kawaguchi and Ma (2012) and Champakew and Pencingkarn (2015) have mentioned that it is necessary to gaze at more settings of EFL learning. This is how the idea of investigating teacher's negotiation of meaning in an English for Specific Purpose (ESP) has come up. As a subset of EFL and English as a Second Language (ESL) course, ESP has its own typicality (Dudley-Evans, 1997). Designed to train students to use English in specific discipline or profession, ESP encourages teacher to keenly collaborate with students in the classroom interaction since they are in general more familiar with the material content than the teacher himself (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Thus, it is firmly assumed that teacher's negotiations of meaning in an ESP classroom can be different from those in a general English classroom.

The above-mentioned ideas were what encouraged the research. Conducted at a training college for cruise ship worker candidates based in Makassar, Indonesia, the research was to reveal the negotiation of meaning strategies used by the teacher in the ESP classroom.

B. Review of Related Literature

1. Negotiation of Meaning

What usually happens when two or more people meet is a verbal interaction called conversation, a social event in which talks are given and taken (Conklin, 2009). In this social event, thoughts, feelings and ideas are expressed, questions are asked and answered, or news and information are exchanged. Conversation does not always run smoothly; it can be troubled. And when the trouble is due to a speaker's unclear speech, negotiation of meaning occurs as the solution.

The term "negotiation of meaning" or "negotiation for meaning" refers to the process that speakers go through to reach a clear understanding of each other in an interactive communication. Pica (1987) proposes that the process occurs when listener signals to the speaker that the speaker's message is not clear and both speaker and listener work linguistically to resolve the impasse. This kind of negotiation is employed by the speakers to achieve successful communication and to accomplish various functions of language.

"Negotiation is communication, but it goes much deeper than the fluent, unbroken sequences of message exchange which characterize the usual concept of communication" (Pica, 1989). When interlocutors negotiate for meaning, they engage in any or all of the following activities; 1) they anticipate possible communication breakdowns, as they ask clarification questions and check each other's comprehension, 2) they identify communication breakdowns for each other, and 3) they repair them through signals and reformulations. These processes are very helpful in language classroom.

Another key role for successful communication is negotiation of meaning. It is the process in which the student and the interlocutor provide and interpret the utterance carried by the student or their interlocutor, or the input, which provokes adjustments to linguistic forms, conversational structure or message content until they reach mutual understanding (Gass & Mackey, 2006). In Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1983), he contends that input is the important factor for language acquisition; however, modified interaction is the necessary mechanism for making language

comprehensible, as it allows students to adjust or modify their less comprehensible message and make them understood to the interlocutors which facilitates their language acquisition (Long, 1996). The strategies for meaning negotiation used during interaction included different kind of questions asked by the interlocutors in order to facilitate L2 acquisition; for example, confirmation checks (Is this what you mean?), comprehension checks (do you understand?), or clarification requests.

In addition, negotiation of meaning strategy is viewed as a vehicle to language proficiency. As it has been described as leading language students to greater awareness of their language and to further development of language proficiency (Ko, Schallert & Walters, 2003). Many studies have shown that negotiation of meaning strategies can enhance students' fluency. As in Sommat's (2007), which observed the effects of the patterns of negotiation of meaning strategies on the English language used in communicative information gap tasks by Thai lower secondary school students. The results suggested that the negotiation of meaning strategies used in the "Spot the Differences" tasks were effective in promoting students' oral English communicative competence.

2. *English for Specific Purpose (ESP)*

As a subset of English as a foreign or second language, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) usually refers to teaching English language to university students, people who are already in employment, or people being prepared to have particular jobs or professions with reference to the particular vocabulary and skills they need (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). A given course of ESP focuses on one occupation or profession, such as Technical English, Scientific English, English for Medical Professionals, English for Tourism, etc.

In line with that, Dudley-Evans (1997) argues that ESP typically meets specific needs of students, makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves, and focuses on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, vocabulary, register, study skills, discourse and genre. From here, we can see that this subset of EFL may be related to or designed for specific disciplines, may use a different methodology from that of general English, and is commonly designed for adult students.

C. Methodology.

The research was designed to be a single case study. It meant that the researcher views and investigates the research object, which was teachers' negotiation of meaning in ESP classroom interaction, as a single case to confirm Long's (1996) and Pica's (1994) notions of negotiation of meaning. This is in accordance with Yin's (2009) proposition that a single case study focuses on a phenomenon or case to explore appropriateness of a theory (explore the theory)

The research was undertaken at *Duta Samudera Indonesia* (DSI), a Makassar-based institution that prepares Indonesian job seekers who are willing to work on cruise ship overseas. Demanded to produce competent workers with good English speaking skill, the private institution employs one EFL teacher to teach the students English for hospitality.

The research subject was picked through purposive sampling. Following Kothari's (2004) notion that purposive sampling is the technique employed to determine the subject by considering some relevant criteria, the researcher had chosen one of the EFL teachers as the research subject for his teaching style; according to results of the researcher's preliminary observation, the subject performed negotiation of meaning more frequently, indicating that he was so keen on building and maintaining classroom interaction with the students through negotiation of meaning.

The research employed two instruments, observation and interview guide. Observation was undertaken to gain a holistic view on what is going on in the classroom interaction. This is in accordance with Creswell's (2012) proposal that observation is a process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing the research site. The researcher observed by recording using camera to capture the whole teaching and learning process in order to find the teacher's use of negotiation of meaning. The research conducted semi-structured interviews with the students using an interview guide, which was a list of relevant questions. Following Mackey and Gass' (2005) idea of semi-structured interview, the researcher had freedom to develop the questions in the interview guide for more information during the interviews session. The interviews with the students were to obtain the data responding to the third research question.

D. Findings & Discussion.

To obtain the data leading to the findings, the researcher attended the teaching and learning process in the ESP classroom as an external observer five times. The simple present tense was introduced through the chosen material. In the first meeting observed by the researcher, the teacher taught the students how to describe the three-bucket system, which is related to cleaning service standard, through the use of the simple present tense. Meanwhile, in the second meeting, the teacher taught the students the vocabulary related to garbage separation, the third meeting was about PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), and the next two meetings were introducing sessions in which the teachers presented some vocabularies related to cruise ship to the new students.

Because of the students' relatively low level of English, the teacher could not avoid using negotiations of meaning as strategies to overcome communicative problems occurring in the classroom interaction with the students. The table below provides a general description of the negotiations of meaning used by the teacher in the two meetings observed by the researcher.

Table 4.1 The Frequency of The Teacher's Use of Negotiation of Meaning in The ESP Classroom Interaction

The Teacher's Use of Negotiation of Meaning	Meeting					Total	Percentage (%)
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th		
Request for Message Clarification	7	7	3	16	6	39	23.78
Confirmation	2	8	26	10	5	40	24.39
Repetition	1	1	8	1	2	13	7.92
Elaboration	6	8	11	4	2	31	18.9
Simplification	5	1	7	1	3	17	10.36
Confirming Repetition	1	1	4	5	2	13	7.92

Total	22	26	59	37	20	164	100
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The above table elucidates that in the five meetings observed by the researcher, the teacher performed negotiation of meaning totally 164 times. As we have seen, the teacher performed negotiations of meaning 22 times in the first meeting, 26 times in the second meeting, 59 at the third meeting, 37 times at the fourth meeting, and 20 times at the fifth meeting. This means that there was no big difference among the five meetings in number of negotiations of meaning used by the teacher in the ESP classroom interaction. In detail, in the five meetings observed by the researcher, the teacher used request for message clarification strategy 39 times, confirmation strategy 40 times, repetition strategy 13 times, elaboration strategy 31 times, and simplification strategy 17 times, and confirming repetition 13 times. This implied that in the five meetings observed by the researcher, the teacher mostly applied confirmation strategy and request for message clarification, often used elaboration strategy, sometimes employed simplification strategy, and seldom ever used repetition and confirming repetition.

Table 4.1 provides that in the five meetings observed by the researcher, the teacher used the five negotiation of meaning strategies proposed by Pica (1996) and Long (1994); request for message clarification, confirmation, repetition, elaboration and simplification. This part of the section is to elucidate how the teacher applied those negotiation of meaning strategies in the ESP classroom interaction.

a. Request for Message Clarification

Request for message clarification is a negotiation of meaning strategy used to ask the speaker to clarify what he or she has just said. In the five meetings observed by the researcher, the teacher applied this strategy 39 times.

b. Confirmation

Confirmation is a negotiation of meaning strategy used as the act of ensuring that the listener does not misunderstand what the speaker says. In the five meetings observed by the researcher, the teacher applied this strategy 40 times.

c. Repetition

Repetition is a negotiation of meaning strategy used to help the interlocutors understand, what he or she has just said by restating the speaker statement. In the five meetings observed by the researcher, the teacher applied this strategy 13 times.

d. Elaboration

Elaboration is a negotiation of meaning strategy which involves providing more explanation about the message, even before the interlocutor conveys an idea about it. In the five meetings observed by the researcher, the teacher applied this strategy 31 times.

e. Simplification

Simplification as a negotiation of meaning strategy means rephrasing the message in simpler way. In the five meetings observed by the researcher, the teacher applied this strategy 17 times.

From the description, it can be said that all negotiation of meaning strategies used by the teacher in extracts above have something in common. They have the same purpose in helping the students to avoid or solve the misunderstanding in the classroom interaction. Despite the way of presenting the strategies above was different one into another, all of them were intended to solve the communication breakdowns in the ESP classroom interaction.

Discussion.

The research findings showed that the teacher could not avoid using negotiation of meaning through the five strategies proposed by Long (1994) and Pica (1996) in the ESP classroom interaction. The students' relatively low English level triggered the teacher's use of negotiation of meaning strategies in the ESP classroom interaction. It seemed that the teacher had no other choices at the moment, except performing the negotiation of meaning strategies

more frequently. The teacher's use of negotiation of meaning strategies were intended to overcome communicative problems occurring in the classroom interaction with the students. It was one of the ways to keep the classroom interaction run well. As Long (1996) or Pica (1997) argue that negotiation of meaning can be used as a vehicle to language proficiency. It can enhance the students' fluency in a language classroom.

The present research findings showed the improvement of the students' participation in the classroom interaction, which was much more active through the teacher's use of negotiation of meaning strategy. The present research focused on the students' speaking performance influenced by the teacher's use of negotiation of meaning strategy. It tended to train the students to speak more for certain purposes like leading the students' to speaking accuracy, and the students' vocabulary improvement related to the given topic, which would help them in their working career later on cruise ship. The negotiation of meaning strategies used by teacher were effective in helping them with the new words or terms in the classroom interaction.

As presented in table 4.1 in the two meetings observed by the researcher, the teacher used totally 164 times of negotiation of meaning strategies. He used 39 times of request for message clarification strategy, 40 times of confirmation strategies, 13 times of repetition strategy, 31 times of elaboration strategies, and 17 times of simplification strategy. The teacher's use of negotiation of meaning strategies became unavoidable thing in the class whose students had low level of English.

As a matter of fact, request for message clarification and confirmation were the two most frequently strategies performed by the teacher. The two strategies were used 39 and 40 times which were greater in number than other strategies. Request for message clarification and confirmation used frequently by the teacher for some certain reasons. Both request for message clarification and confirmation seemed had become the teacher's teaching style, and it was also because the students' low level vocabulary. As a result, the teacher seemed eager to perform both of them frequently among other strategies in doing negotiation of meaning in the ESP classroom interaction. Conclusively, the research findings seemed in line with Champakew and Pencingkarn's (2015) claimed that request for message clarification and confirmation are two negotiation of meaning strategies commonly used by teachers in EFL classroom interactions.

The teacher loved to do request for message clarification as he realized that most of the students lacked of vocabulary, they had low level of English. The teacher's use of request for message clarification made the students speak more and learn something from the process. While the 40 times the teacher's use of confirmation made sure that the students get some new vocabularies, and understand what they teacher is talking about. It was so clear that the teacher should give them confirmation frequently, reminding the confirmation strategy was very effective in helping the students to speak more and get more new words by checking their comprehension, and providing more explanation after that. Obviously, this confirms Conklin's (2009) idea that teachers usually initiate interaction by asking a question; the question can create more interaction activities and prompt students to participate in all kinds of negotiation of meaning.

In other side, repetition was the least strategy used by the teacher in the ESP classroom interaction. The teacher of course, had a reason for this. Repetition was a quite simpler way, but effective in helping the students with their pronunciation and remembering certain words well. So, when he used it only thirteen times, or the least among others, it was only a matter of habit or teaching style of the teacher and the condition at the moment. Conclusively, this finding merely supports Pica's (1994) and Long's (1996) notion that teacher's use of repetition mostly helps students identify certain words or expressions emphasized by the teacher.

Request for message clarification as the first negotiation of meaning strategy used to ask the speaker to clarify what he/she just said. Based on the result of researcher's analysis, it showed that the teacher's request for message clarification strategy had some purposes, as presented in detail at the previous section. The strategy was intended to ensure the students' understanding about the thing that had been explained, to overcome the misunderstanding, it can be also functioned as a verbal cue to make the students speak more to convey their ideas, trained the students to say their response again, when there was an error in it. The findings seemed to have supported Pica and Doughty's (1985) findings that a request for message clarification encourages the speaker to clarify what he or she has said, which is still unclear to the listener.

Confirmation, the next negotiation of meaning strategy as the act of ensuring that the students do not misunderstand what the teacher has said. After the analysis of the observation result as, it can be said that the confirmation strategy was aimed at helping the students to understand the new difficult words, making the interaction run well, overcoming the

communication breakdowns, and handling misunderstanding in the ESP classroom interaction. The findings seem to go along with Pica's (1994) notion that a confirmation is mostly used for comprehension check in a classroom interaction.

Repetition as the last strategy used by restating the teacher's statement, helped the interlocutor understand what the teacher tried to explain or emphasize. From the process, it was supposed as a quite simpler way, and from the analysis of the observation result, it can be concluded that the repetition strategy was a simpler way and effective in making the students remember the words or terms better; it could also help to avoid misunderstanding.

Elaboration used as frequently as request for message clarification, performed by the teacher, by involving more explanation by using simpler words, even before the students gave their response. The purpose of this strategy was to help the students understand new terms or words well, and to avoid misunderstanding. So, it can be concluded that the research findings discussed above are just to confirm Pica's (1994), Long's (1996) and Conklin's (2009) that an elaboration, which involves providing more information about what has been said, helps listeners understand what the speaker exactly means by what he or she says.

The last strategy discussed here, simplification, is a negotiation of meaning strategy which is used by simplifying the message through the use of more familiar words, or rephrasing the ideas into simpler form. As the result of the observation analysis at the previous section, this strategy was intended to help the students understand the message easier, avoid misunderstanding and provide corrective feedback. Finally, it can be said that this finding is in line with Kawaguchi and Ma's (2012) findings that the use of negotiation of meaning strategies, including simplification, mostly functions as corrective feedback and interaction "booster" in ESL/EFL learning.

Based on the description above, it can be said that the strategies performed by the teacher in the ESP classroom interaction had something in common. They had the same purposes; to help the students to avoid misunderstanding that was very possible occurred in the ESP classroom interaction; and to solve the communication breakdowns which colored the classroom interaction frequently. Those points will lead the student's to speaking accuracy, and will give the chance to the students to speak more and convey their ideas in ESP classroom interaction. It is the process in which the student and the interlocutor provide and interpret the utterance carried

by the student or their interlocutor, or the input, which provokes adjustments to linguistic forms, conversational structure or message content until they reach mutual understanding (Gass & Mackey, 2006).



Figure 4.1

Apart from all the strategies presented above, the five negotiation of meaning strategies proposed by Long (1994) and Pica (1996), there was one another strategy form used by the teacher. It was a combination between repetition and confirmation. Structurally, it could be classified as repetition, but from the purpose it referred to confirmation. The researcher named it confirming repetition. The strategy was performed by doing some repetition as well as doing confirmation (*Ok., United States is USA.... do you know when I say USA?; To protect the health and safety of our guests and the crew. To protect, to save? To protect is?; Well-dressed. Do you know well-dressed?*). The strategy was conducted to avoid misunderstanding, and to help the student understand the message well.

E. Conclusion

The result of this study revealed that the teacher could not avoid using the negotiation of meaning strategies in the ESP classroom interaction. The following are the conclusions drawn based on the research findings and discussion in the previous chapter.

The five types of negotiation meaning strategies proposed by Pica (1994) and Long (1996) were innately pervasive in teacher's use of those strategies in the ESP classroom interactions with different quantities; the teacher used totally 164 negotiation of meaning strategies, 39 request for message clarification strategies, 40 confirmation strategies, 13 repetition strategies, 31 elaboration strategies, and 17 simplification strategies in the two meetings observed by the researcher. From the fact the researcher considered that the class was dominated by basic-level learners who were still poor in vocabulary, which then made the reason for performing negotiation of meaning strategies in the ESP classroom interaction become unavoidable things for the teacher.

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