

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

# HOW THE POSITIVE ROLE OF LEARNER-LEARNER INTERACTION ENHANCES COMMUNICATION PROCESS IN ESL ENVIRONMENT

Nirogith.A,<sup>\*</sup>1 Subajana J,<sup>1</sup> and Y. Atchuthan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Vavuniya, Sri Lanka

<sup>2</sup>Advanced Technological Institute of Vavuniya, Sri Lanka

\* [ajudenirogith@gmail.com](mailto:ajudenirogith@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

In many kinds of research on language interaction many linguists have clearly shown that the negotiation of meaning play a vital role in the second language acquisition process. Although negotiation of meaning is an essential strategy in the English as a Second Language (ESL) learning process, there is still a need to investigate whether it is a unique characteristic in the ESL language learning setting. It affects learners' production. Negotiation of meaning stimulates the learners to remember their past experiences with their peers' assistance, interact with them in English and helps understand how non-native speakers negotiate to mean and use communication strategies in learner-learner interaction. This research has been done using a qualitative method selecting 40 learners in 20 pairs as a sample. Negotiation of meaning supports second language acquisition when learners understand the interaction and express their meaning in a second language. The results show negotiation of meaning is an essential strategy in the ESL learning process for the students to improve their communication ability.

**Keywords:** Negotiation of meaning, interaction, second language acquisition, collaborative dialogues.

## 1. Introduction

A good number of studies on applied linguistics have recognized the learner interaction's positive role in the second language acquisition process. The learner-learner interaction through negotiation of meaning supports the learners to have a good interaction among them without breakdowns in communication. Through interactional adjustments, comprehensible input, such as negotiating to mean and modifying output, is central to second language acquisition (Long 1985, 1996). Many kinds of research have been undertaken to discover which classroom activities give learners the most significant benefit from this type of interaction (Pica 1994). Interaction through negotiation of meaning has its demand in second language acquisition because it provides positive inputs (comprehensible input). In addition, comprehensible input modifies the learners' contribution to the interaction of interaction to understand the message of the interaction (modified output). When the learners receive responses to their production, they also get the correct feedback on their responses from others. According to Long (1985, 1996), the most practical input is made understandable through

interactional adjustments. These are the attempts of learners and their partners to overcome comprehension difficulties. Comprehensible or partly comprehensible input becomes comprehensible through negotiating meaning. English as second language learners engage in negotiating meaning with their educators and fellow learners when they do the activities and language learning tasks. Negotiation supports the ESL learners with logical and altered inputs and drives the learners to produce output. Task-prompted language, taking the form of collaborative dialogue or private speech, results from performing such writing tasks as jigsaw, dictogloss, text-reconstruction, text-editing, picture description, and composition writing either collaboratively or individually (Storch, 2013)

## 2. Methodology

The learners of this task were 13-15 years old school students from a very backward area and very poor in English, but they are interested in learning and improving their speaking proficiency in English. They have English subject for 40 minutes every day during school hours. At the weekend, they attend the Vanni Aid Foundation English project classes for two hours each day. They always show their desire to interact with the teacher and others in English and ask the teachers to translate Tamil sentences into English to chat with other students in English. Their interest reveals that they must be activated by giving some schema to make them interact without breakdowns. The particular school was on an excursion to some historical places in Sri Lanka such as Sigiriya, Dhaladha Maligava, Dambulla etc. Among the selected 40 learners, twenty of them went for the excursion. The other twenty of them could not go for the excursion. All 40 learners were made into twenty pairs; each pair was made based on the criteria as a participant in the excursion and non-participant in the excursion, and each pair was called one after the other and given a picture of a place to a non-participant of the excursion and he/she wanted to know some details about it from his or her partner who visited to the particular place during the excursion and simultaneously he/she did not have a picture in hand. The pairs were asked to sit at the separate tables opposite each other and told that they had experienced doing the activity one pair after the other. The one who was having the picture instructed that he/she had to question the place and the visit using its picture to remind quickly to have good interactions. They were given 10 minutes to do the activity, and the interaction was tape-recorded. The data were analyzed qualitatively.

**Table 1.** Comprehensible input to make the interaction successful

Activity 1	Activity 2
Learner 1: You went to Sigiriya? Learner 2: Sigiriya? (Confirmation check)	Learner 1: What you see in Dhalatha Maligava? Learner 2: Dhalatha Maligava (Confirmation check) I saw the beautiful building, pictures of Buddha
Learner 1: You saw the swimming pool? Learner 2: Yah... I..... What you asked? (Clarification request)	LR 1: You see pikku there? You know who pikku? (Comprehensible check) LR 2: Yes, I saw
Learner 1: You saw the swimming pool? You know what swimming pool? (Comprehensible check) L2: You asked swimming pool?	LR 1: You saw the Buddha tooth LR 2: mmmm..... you asked tooth? (Clarification request)

## 3. Discussions and Findings

When the learner-learner interaction took place, the learners' clarification requests, comprehension, and confirmation checks were observed. The feedback about the problem learners had in communication was given to them by the educator. The learners participated in the interaction, actively

helping each other do the activity through co-construction and prompting. The learners were very much interested in doing the task. They encouraged the partner giving all necessary assistance initiating self-repair of their utterances when there was a communication breakdown. The learners received comprehensible input to make the interaction successful.

Table 2. The findings show the following aspects

Positive aspects	Negative aspect
The learners were able to ask specific question to get the details about the excursion since they had the relevant pictures of particular places.	Unfortunately, the learners did not have enough time to speak.
The learners were also able to ask questions without monopolizing.	The learners did not focus on grammatical sentence patterns. Since the learner-learner interaction was tap recorded the teacher could not correct and point out their mistakes
The learners could work on specific weakness and focus on specific skill such as raising question in English and answering to the questions comprehensibly.	The learners lacked in critical connection between form and meaning, which is very much needed for language learning.
The learners had more chances to speak in the interaction because they were activated through schema.	
The effectiveness of this approach can be enhanced by encouraging learners to negotiate meaning themselves	
This activity gave the opportunities for the learners to practice their communication in meaningful contexts	
The learners were also able to ask questions without monopolizing.	

#### 4. Conclusion

According to the present study, negotiation of meaning is an essential strategy in the ESL learning process in developing and improving communication ability and language learning. Through a control group activity the study reveals that interacting with their fellow learners in the ESL classroom assist them in producing a better outcome in speaking the target language in a better way. Further, this study says that practical and motivational benefits can also result when ESL learners are encouraged to exchange real opinions and information to have a meaningful interaction in the ESL classroom. The negotiation of meaning occurs while learner-learner interaction has been recommended for second language acquisition at different levels. The three levels of learner-learner interaction ( confirmation check, clarification request, comprehensible check) provide the learners' information and details that help for the best performance in improving the learners' speaking proficiency.

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