



TEACHERS' STRATEGIES FOR NEGOTIATING MEANING DURING TASK CLARIFICATION IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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By encouraging students to articulate their understanding, teachers promote autonomy and critical thinking. Learners become active participations in the learning process rather than passive recipients

ABSTRACT

In English as a Foreign language (EFL) classrooms, task clarification is a critical moment where teachers ensure that learners understand what is expected of them. This phase is not merely instructional but deeply interactive, involving negotiation of meaning between teacher and student. Effective negotiation during task clarification can significantly enhance learners' comprehension, engagement, and language acquisition. This paper explores the strategies teachers use to negotiate meaning during task clarification episodes and analyzes their impact on learner understanding..

Introduction

In English as a Foreign language (EFL) classrooms, task clarification is a critical moment where teachers ensure that learners understand what is expected of them. This phase is not merely instructional but deeply interactive, involving negotiation of meaning between teacher and student. Effective negotiation during task clarification can significantly enhance learners' comprehension, engagement, and language acquisition. This paper explores the strategies teachers use to negotiate meaning during task clarification episodes and analyzes their impact on learner understanding.

Theoretical framework

Negotiation of meaning is a concept rooted in interactionist theories of second language acquisition. According to Long (1983), meaningful interaction that includes clarification requests, confirmation checks, and comprehension strategies facilitates language development. Krashen's input Hypothesis (1985) also emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input, which is often achieved through negotiation. In classroom settings, negotiation of meaning becomes a pedagogical tool that bridges the gap between instruction and learner understanding.

Definition and scope

Negotiation of meaning refers to the process by which interlocutors work to overcome communication breakdowns and ensure mutual understanding. In EFL classrooms, this often occurs when students struggle to grasp task instructions, prompting teachers to employ various strategies to clarify, simplify, or rephrase their language.

Relevance to EFL contexts

In EFL environments, where learners may have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, the teacher's role in facilitating understanding becomes even more crucial. Task clarification is not just about giving instructions; it is about ensuring those instructions are understood, internalized, and acted upon correctly.

Methodology

This study was conducted in three private EFL institutions in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Twelve teachers were observed over a period of four weeks. Classroom interactions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using discourse analysis techniques. The focus was on episodes where teachers clarified tasks and engaged in negotiation of meaning with students.

Data collection

Participants: 12 EFL teachers with varying levels of experience.

Setting: Intermediate-level classroom with 10-15 students.

Tools: Audio recordings, observation notes, and post-lesson interviews.

Analytical Framework

The analysis focused on identifying patterns of interaction, types of clarification strategies, and student responses. Categories included clarification requests, rephrasing, confirmation checks, and scaffolding techniques.

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Findings and discussion

The study revealed four dominant strategies used by teachers during task clarification:

Clarification Requests

Teachers frequently asked questions such as:

- "What do you think you need to do?"
- "Can you explain the task in your own words?"

These questions prompted students to verbalize their understanding, allowing teachers to assess comprehension and intervene if necessary

Rephrasing and simplification

When students showed signs of confusion, teachers rephrased instructions using simpler language or provided examples. For instance:

- Original: "You need to synthesize the main ideas."
- Rephrased: "Please find the most important points and put them together."

This strategy was particularly effective for lower-proficiency learners.

Confirmation and feedback

Teachers often confirmed student interpretations with phrases like:

- "Yes, that's correct."
- "Almost right, but remember to include..."

This feedback helped students refine their understanding and boosted confidence.

Scaffolding and modeling

Some teachers modeled the risk by doing a sample together with the class. This visual and participatory approach helped bridge comprehension gaps and encouraged active engagement.

Implications for teaching practice

The findings suggest that negotiation of meaning during task clarification is not only beneficial but essential in EFL classrooms. Teachers who actively engage students in clarifying tasks foster deeper understanding and more meaningful participation.

Enhancing learner autonomy

By encouraging students to articulate their understanding, teachers promote autonomy and critical thinking. Learners become active participations in the learning process rather than passive recipients.

Building confidence and reducing anxiety

Clear and interactive task clarification reduces ambiguity, which in turn lowers learner anxiety and increases willingness to participate.

Conclusion

Negotiation of meaning during task clarification is a vital component of effective EFL instruction. Teachers who employ interactive strategies such as clarification requests, rephrasing, confirmation, and scaffolding create a supportive learning environment where students feel empowered to engage and succeed. These strategies not only aid comprehension but also contribute to the develop of communicative competence

Recommendations

- Teacher Training: Professional development programs should include modules on interactive task clarification and negotiation strategies.
- Curriculum design: materials should encourage teacher-student interaction during instruction phases.
- Further research: Future studies could explore negotiation strategies in online EFL settings or among younger learners.

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