

NEGOTIATION OF MEANING IN SPEAKING CLASS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the components, types, and role of negotiation of meaning among students during oral interaction in a speaking class of eleventh grade at one private vocational school in Tangerang, Indonesia. The researchers employed a case study including non-participant observation, unstructured interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. The participants of this study were thirty pharmacy students. The data analysis processes were reducing the data, data display, and drawing/ verification. The procedures of this research included: collecting the data, observing students conversations, analyzing the data, and concluding/interpreting the data. The findings revealed that the most frequently used component was trigger, and the most commonly used type was repetition. The role of negotiation of meaning facilitated collaborative efforts among students to seek clarification, creating a supportive environment. This process boosted confidence, aided comprehension, and encouraged active contributions to language development, fostering a mutually beneficial learning community.

Keywords : negotiation of meaning, speaking class

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INTRODUCTION

When individuals with diverse backgrounds engage in a conversation, English serves as a language that brings them together (Ratnasari, 2020). Although English is not the primary language in Indonesia, students can still acquire it, and the majority of schools require that they do so. From elementary school to university, English began to be taught. Students must master four skills when learning English: speaking skills, reading skills, listening skills, and writing skills. According to Setiyadi (2020), speaking skill is the most difficult aspect of learning and

teaching a new language. However, it cannot be denied that speaking is also an important thing to master because it is related to communicating verbally and non-verbally. Students can also exchange information with others.

Even though they have been studied since elementary school, there are still many students who have difficulty learning English, especially in speaking skills. According to Puspa et al. (2023) and Raba'ah (2005) numerous factors contribute to the challenges encountered while speaking English. These factors encompass aspects related to the learners, teaching



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methods, curriculum, and the environment.

According to Darmiyati (2007), the limited achievement in English language learning can be ascribed to a dual set of determinants, which can be categorized into external and internal factors. External factors can be further subdivided into social and non-social components, with social factors stemming from the students themselves and non-social factors encompassing aspects such as the learning environment, weather conditions, and the timing of the learning process. Internal factors also fall into two classifications, specifically physiological factors involving the functioning of various bodily organs in students and psychological factors encompassing students' motivation and interest in their studies.

The research related to this research was written by Kusuma et al. (2023). The purpose of this research was to discover how student-teacher-student interactions in a natural EFL classroom environment involve negotiation of meaning and form, as well as how student-teachers use negotiation of meaning and form tactics in the EFL classroom. In contrast to the previous study, this

research serves to analyze the negotiation of meaning at the vocational education level.

Based on the results of the researchers' interview with the English teacher and several students in the eleventh grade of pharmacy students at one private vocational school in Tangerang, the teacher said that many students have difficulty in learning English, especially in speaking English, students encounter several challenges when it comes to speaking English. When the teacher encourages the students to engage in conversations, they encounter various difficulties. These speaking challenges can be attributed to factors like a restricted vocabulary, and issues with grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. Frequently, students make errors when speaking, and this can lead to misunderstandings when attempting to convey their ideas. Consequently, when they need to express something in English, they often find themselves in a state of confusion.

Based on the background of the study, the research aims to answer the following questions: (1) What components of negotiation of meaning occur in speaking classes? (2) What



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types of negotiation of meaning occur in speaking classes? (3) What roles does negotiation of meaning play in speaking classes?

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Harmer (2007) defines communication as happening if the listener understands the communication and offers feedback to the speaker. Furthermore, speaking is the key to communication. People can convey feelings, ideas, opinions, and information to others by speaking. According to Brown (2001), there are five types of speaking, such as: imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and extensive.

Vanderkevent (1990) classified three components of speaking, such: the speakers, the listeners, and the utterances. Meanwhile, Brown (2001) further stated that there are five components of speaking skills, such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Aprilya et al. (2024), Fadlilah et al. (2020), Indahsari et al. (2025), and Setiawati (2017) stated that teaching spoken language involves instructing individuals in the use of language as a means of communicating thoughts, conveying knowledge and information, and even

expressing meaning and emotions to others. This is because speaking enables us to convey our thoughts and ideas to others effectively. As a result, if students fail to acquire speaking skills or are not provided with opportunities for speaking in the language classroom, they might quickly lose their motivation and enthusiasm for learning. Conversely, when appropriate activities are introduced effectively, participating in class discussions can become an enjoyable experience, enhancing overall learner motivation and turning the English language classroom into an engaging and dynamic environment.

According to Yufrizal (2007), the concept of negotiation of meaning involves a chain of conversations between the speaker and listener, aimed at aiding both parties in understanding and making themselves understood by their conversation partners. In other words, the process of reaching a mutually understood understanding is known as 'Negotiation of meaning.' Learners of second or foreign languages use it to avoid any potential mistakes during a conversation. As misconceptions arise during the conversation, the



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interlocutor finds it difficult to maintain their interaction and tries to change their communication tactics, including negotiation of meaning as an effective option.

Base on Pica (1991), there are four components in negotiation of meaning, such as: trigger, signals, response, and follow-up. There are five types of negotiation of meaning according to Long in Oliver (2002), such as: comprehension check, confirmation check, clarification request, appeal for help, and repetition.

Pica (1996) further stated that although there is no concrete empirical evidence establishing a direct connection between negotiation of meaning and second language development, research conducted in the last two decades on negotiation of meaning has highlighted two significant ways in which it contributes to second language acquisition. First, non-native speakers are far more likely to receive the comprehensible input needed for second language acquisition when meaning is negotiated than when meaning is not negotiated. Second, negotiation of meaning provides non-native speakers with more opportunities than

interactions without negotiation of meaning to create the understandable output required for second language acquisition.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the researchers used qualitative research. The method of this research was a case study. The research object in this research is the negotiation of meaning in speaking class at eleventh grade of one private vocational school, Tangerang. The research subjects in this research were eleventh grade of pharmacy class, totaling 30 students who are attending speaking class. This research used a purposive sampling for participant selection.

For the purpose of acquiring the necessary data and information for this research, the researcher employs the subsequent methods of data collection, such as observation, interview, and documentation. The data analysis processes are reducing the data, data display, and drawing/verification. The procedures of this research are to collect the data, observe students conversations, analyze the data, and make a description of the data. The researchers intend to employ the



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technique of data triangulation. The technique involved a comparative analysis of observational data and interview-derived data in order to acquire a comprehensive dataset.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the components of negotiation of meaning and types of negotiation of meaning were obtained from observation and documentation, while the results of the role of negotiation of meaning were obtained from interviews and documentation.

The researcher found 15 utterances of trigger produced by the students in the conversation. In the first observation, the students produced 10 utterances, and in the second observation, five utterances. The detailed data of the trigger is as follows:

Student A: *"My mom cook um... same menu with you yesterday."*
 Student B: *"cook fried rice?"*

When student A says, "My mom cooks um... same menu with you yesterday" student A wants to explain or clarify the food cooked by his mother, which is the same as what student B cooked before. It is related to Yufriзал (2007), when a speaker produces a comprehension check that

prompts the listener to generate a confirmation check or clarification request, the comprehension check functions as a trigger for negotiation of meaning.

The researcher found 12 utterances of signals produced by the students in the conversation. In the first observation, the students produced eight utterances, and in the second observation, four utterances. Here is the data:

Student A: *"Have you submitted last week's assignment?"*
 Student B: *"Yes, I have submitted the assignment."*

In this conversation, when Student B said, "Yes, I have submitted the assignment," Student B gave a response that confirmed and answered the question asked by Student A, "Have you submitted last week's assignment?" thus confirming the understanding that he would indeed pick up his sister after school. This is a way to establish clear understanding in the context of this conversation. This is in accordance with Helmi (2021), the interlocutors repeat all or some portions of the speaker's utterance.

The researchers found 10 utterances of response produced by



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the students in the conversation. In the first observation, the students produced seven utterances, and in the second observation, three utterances. The data is as follows:

Student A: *"Hey, do you see my pen?"*
 Student B: *"Sorry?"*
 Student A: *"My pen. Can you help me to find it?"*

When student B signals incomprehension with his question "Sorry?" and student A responds by providing clarification and additional information, namely "My pen. Can you help me to find it?" So, Student A is the one who gives the response to explain his request in the context of negotiation of meaning. This is a way to establish clear understanding in the context of this conversation. This is in accordance with Foster (1998); the speaker adjusts the signal to mirror the input received from the listener.

The researcher found 13 utterances of follow-up produced by the students in the conversation. In the first observation, the students produced nine utterances, and in the second observation, four utterances. The detailed data of follow-up is as follows:

Student A: *"So British is orang orang United Kingdom?"*

Student B: *"Ya, British is orang orang United Kingdom."*

The action taken by student B by repeating and confirming what student A said, "yes, British is people of the United Kingdom," can be considered a follow-up in the negotiation of meaning. Student B not only repeats Student A's statement but also provides confirmation or agreement, which helps to ensure a better understanding in the conversation about the definition of "British" as "people of the United Kingdom." This is an example of a followup that aims to clarify and reinforce understanding in the context of negotiation of meaning. This is in accordance with Varonis and Grass (1985); follow-up is information about whether the communication modification has been successful or not.

Table 1. Component of Negotiation of Meaning

No	Component of Negotiation of Meaning	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Trigger	15	30%
2	Signals	12	24%
3	Response	10	20%
4	Follow-Up	13	26%
Total		50	100%

Based on the table, it can be concluded that the dominant



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component in negotiation of meaning used by the students at eleventh grade during speaking class is trigger. Triggers are mostly used by eleventh grade students because most of them feel confused or do not understand information or something, so they ask for clarification or help from their friends to clarify their understanding.

The researcher found three conversations of comprehension check produced by the students in the conversation, as the example below:

Student A: *"Have you ever watch The Fault in Our Star movies?"*

Student B: *"Hm, is that about cancer patients?"*

When student A asks student B if he has seen the film "The Fault in Our Stars," and student B responds with a question to clarify whether the film relates to cancer patients. With this question and response, there is an attempt to check the understanding between the two parties. Student B uses the question "Is that about cancer patients?" to ensure that he understands the subject and to verify that the film is about cancer patients. It is in line with Long in Oliver (2002), this type involves the speaker employing a comprehension check to ascertain whether the interlocutor

comprehends the message. These checks typically consist of questions, such as tag questions, repetition with rising intonation, or any expressions aimed at confirming if the message is understood by the listener.

The researcher found two conversations of confirmation checks produced by the students in the conversation as follows:

Student A: *"Have you submitted last week's assignment?"*

Student B: *"Yes, I have submitted the assignment. Math right?"*

Student A: *"Yes, Math."*

When student A asks if student B has collected the assignment, student B confirms with the question "Math right?" which aims to ensure that he correctly understands the assignment being discussed. In student A's response, he also confirmed with "Yes, math," confirming that the task in question was a maths task. This is a clear example of communication that includes confirmation and checking of understanding in the context of the conversation. It is in line with Long in Oliver (2002), the confirmation check is the speaker's way of inquiring whether their interpretation of the interlocutor's meaning is correct.



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Next, the researchers found three conversations of clarification requests produced by the students in the conversation as follows:

Student A: *"Where is my pen?"*
 Student B: *"What color?"*
 Student A: *"The blue one."*

When student A asks, "Where is my pen?" he expresses his confusion about where his pen is. Then, when student B responds with the question, "What colour?" he tries to get more information to clearly understand the pen student A is referring to. With the question "What color?" student B asks for clarification about the color of the lost pen, so that he can help find a pen that matches the description given by student A, "The blue one." Therefore, this conversation includes a type of "clarification request" in an attempt to understand and further explain the situation being discussed. It is in line with Long in Oliver (2002), in this type, a clarification request is a way of asking for additional information or assistance in comprehending something the interlocutor has previously stated.

The researchers found three conversations of appealing for help produced by the students in the conversation. Here is the example:

Student A: *"This question is hard to answer."*

Student B: *"What?"*

Student A: *"This question is hard. Do you know the answer?"*

When student A says, "This question is hard to answer," he reveals that he is having difficulty answering the question. Then, student B responds with the question "What?" which indicates that he wants more information or clarification. Student A then explained further, "This question is hard. Do you know the answer?" which shows that he is asking for help or wants to know if student B knows the answer to the question. Therefore, in this conversation, there is a clear attempt to "appeal for help" in order to seek help or clarification in understanding a difficult question. It is in line with Long in Oliver (2002) that the interlocutor ensures that the information they heard is clear.

The last, the researcher found four conversations of repetition produced by the students in the conversation, as the example below:

Student A: *"I think I'm gonna buy new shoes, is tomorrow free?"*

Student B: *"Tomorrow?"*

Student A: *"Yes, tomorrow, I'm gonna buy with my brother."*



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When student A first states, "I think I'm gonna buy new shoes, is tomorrow free?" Student B gives a response that reflects incomprehension by simply repeating the word "tomorrow?" Student A then responded with more clarity and detail, "Yes, tomorrow, I'm gonna buy with my brother." In this second response, student A repeats the information about tomorrow and provides additional context by mentioning that he will buy shoes with his brother. So, the element of repetition occurs when information that is not clearly understood is repeated with more context or explanation to help the other speaker understand it. It is in line with Long in Oliver (2002); the speaker precisely repeats or expands lexical items from their previous utterances. Typically, the speaker rephrases the question to the interlocutor, and the interlocutor echoes the question.

Tabel 2. Types of Negotiation of Meaning

No	Types of Negotiation of Meaning	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Comprehension Check	3	20%
2	Confirmation Check	2	13%
3	Clarification Request	3	20%
4	Appealing for Help	3	20%
5	Repetition	4	27%
Total		15	100%

Based on the table, it can be concluded that the dominant types of negotiation of meaning used by the students in eleventh grade during speaking class is repetition. Repetition is mostly used by the eleventh grade students because most of the students feel the need to repeat back words or sentences or information given to clarify and ensure that they understand the message conveyed by their friends.

In the research, the researchers interviewed 15 students out of 30 students to determine the role of negotiation of meaning because only 15 students did negotiation of meaning during speaking class. Here are the details:

"Have you ever had a situation when you didn't understand a word or a phrase in English or the language you are learning?"

Based on the question, all students answered that they had encountered circumstances in which they did not understand a word or sentence in English or the foreign language they were learning.

"Do you usually ask your teacher or classmates if there is a word you don't understand when you are learning English?"

According to the question, all students said they generally ask the



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teacher or their classmates if there are any words they don't understand in the language they are learning.

"Do you agree that asking for clarification when you don't understand something helps you understand the language you are learning?"

Based on the question, all students felt that asking for clarification helped them understand phrases or sentences that they did not understand.

"Do you feel more confident speaking in the language you are learning because you know you can ask if there is a word or sentence you don't know?"

Nine of the 15 students who responded to the question said yes. The majority of them claimed that they felt comfortable using English because they may ask questions about terms or sentences that they do not understand. As a result, they are unconcerned if their interlocutors do not understand the message they are communicating.

"Do you find classmates who help you understand the meaning of difficult words helpful in language learning?"

To this question, all students said yes. They say that their friends are really helpful in comprehending English words or sentences that they do not grasp.

"How do you feel when you successfully explain the meaning of an unknown word or sentence to a classmate or stranger? Does this make you feel more confident in speaking the language you are learning?"

All of the students responded positively to the question, stating that they felt more confidence when they could explain a phrase or sentence that their friends did not understand. They were also pleased to be able to assist their friends who were unable to understand a word or sentence in English.

Based on the results of interviews, it can be concluded that the role of negotiation of meaning is the acknowledgment that not understanding certain words or sentences is a natural part of language learning. The role of negotiation of meaning becomes apparent as learners actively navigate these challenges, seek clarification, and collaboratively work towards a better understanding of the language they are learning. The students' practice of asking teachers or classmates when they encounter unfamiliar words reflects an active engagement in the negotiation of meaning. This collaborative and supportive approach enhances the



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language learning experience and contributes to the development of effective communication skills.

The students' agreement that asking for clarification helps them understand the language underscores the pivotal role of negotiation of meaning in language learning. The positive correlation between confidence in speaking the language and the ability to ask for clarification highlights the instrumental role of negotiation of meaning in language learning. The students' affirmation that classmates who help them understand difficult words are helpful highlights the pivotal role of negotiation of meaning in a collaborative learning setting. The students' positive feelings and increased confidence after successfully explaining unknown words highlight the integral role of negotiation of meaning in language learning.

The study's findings are consistent with those of Kusuma et al. (2023) and Pica's (1996), which states that negotiation of meaning provides students with more opportunities to create understandable information needed for both second and foreign language learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, most of the students apply negotiation of meaning in their conversation. The component of negotiation of meaning includes: trigger that produced in 15 utterances, signals are 12 utterances, response 10 utterances, and follow-up 13 utterances.

The type of negotiation of meaning that is mostly used by the student are repetition in four conversation, comprehension check in three conversation, confirmation in two conversation, clarification request in three conversation, and appealing for help in three conversation.

The role of negotiation of meaning is evident in the context of language learning. Students usually encounter unfamiliar words or sentences in English or the foreign language they are learning. Their approach is to actively seek clarification from teachers or classmates, which highlights the collaborative nature of negotiation of meaning. The consensus among the students was that seeking clarification significantly helped in understanding these linguistic challenges.



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Since this present study does not investigate how negotiation meaning influence or effect student do speaking performance, therefore, further studies are also recommended to investigate how negotiation of meaning influences and effects students' speaking performances. This can be further studied through experiment or research and development methods.

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