

Patterns of negotiation of meaning in English as second language learners interactions

ABSTRACT

Problem Statement: The Internet as a tool that presents many challenges has drawn the attention of researchers in the field of education and especially foreign language teaching. However, there has been a lack of information about the true nature of these environments. In recent years, determination of the patterns of negotiation of meaning as a way to delve in these environments has grown in popularity.

Purpose of the Study: The current study was an effort to determine the types and frequencies of negotiation of meaning in the interaction of Malaysian students as English as a second language learners and, furthermore, to compare findings of this study with correspondent previous studies. To this end, two research questions were posed for this study: (a) what types of negotiation of meaning emerge in text-based synchronous CMC environments? and (b) Are there any differences between findings of this study and previous studies in terms of negotiation of meaning functions in this environment?

Method: Participants of this study were fourteen English as second language learners at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). They were involved in a series of discussions over selected short stories. Analysis of students' chat logs was carried out through computer - mediated discourse analysis (CMDA).

Findings and Results: This study yielded 10 types of functions in negotiation of meaning, which are clarification request, confirmation, confirmation check, correction or self correction, elaboration, elaboration request, reply clarification or definition, reply confirmation, reply elaboration, and vocabulary check. Furthermore, findings of this study indicated that students negotiated with an average of 2.10 per 100 words. According to the findings of this study, the most - frequently used functions were confirmation, elaboration, and elaboration request and the least frequently used functions were vocabulary check, reply confirmation, and reply clarification. The findings of this study were in line with the findings of previous studies in that the proficiency of the participants influences the amount of negotiation for meaning strategies that occur.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Findings of this study will give insight to teachers, learners, and researchers in the field of SLA and will help to sustain their liveliness and curiosity. Taking into account the current situation of Malaysia as the country that host so many international students from all over the world, future studies of these kinds can focus on examining the factor of proficiency in different dyads and its effect on students' interactions in terms of negotiation of meaning.

Keyword: Computer – mediated communication (CMC); Computer–mediated discourse analysis (CMDA); Negotiation of meaning; Teaching English as a second language; Language learning