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**Meaning Negotiation in the EFL
Classroom at BUAP Languages
Faculty**

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DEDICATIONS

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Meaning Negotiation in the EFL Classroom
at BUAP Languages Faculty

(Abstract)

The meaning negotiation research line has taken hold in the field of second language acquisition because it has reassessed the importance of interactions between individuals involved in the process. Therefore, the purpose of this project was to identify ways of negotiation of meaning in oral interactions of the Target Language IV from the BUAP languages faculty, then categorize them according to the type of negotiation of meaning described by Long (1996). This research used a qualitative methodology since it tried to understand the phenomenon. The participants were thirty students from the target Language IV class. Eventually, the Teacher-Student and the Student-Student interactions were recorded and to collect data, a Meaning Negotiation Checklist was used as the main instrument.

The results show that this process occurs hardly in the class and mostly within the Teacher- Student interaction. Accordingly, this study enables to consider a process that has not been clearly defined in the teaching and learning practices at the faculty. Then, this research will allow to acquire new insights into it in order to formulate a more precise problem or develop hypothesis, since it is known that observing how this process occurs in teacher-student interactions and student-student will have a valuable input to explain what happens in the classroom and thus improve the performance of the courses. In addition, this study will document the characteristics of negotiation of meaning which, in future, will let designing more specific studies on the impact on the results of the learning process.

Chapter I: Introduction

Recently, learning foreign languages has become essential, since every day they are used in almost all of knowledge areas and human development. Consequently, it is a fact that learning another language enables people to enrich their life with new experiences, gain benefit of cultural worldwide diversity as well as significantly improve their professional perspectives. In this sense, the ability to speak another language becomes an important tool for people to be able to deal with the increasingly complex demands of society.

Therefore, given the fact that we live in a changing world, through time, there have been important changes in language learning approaches where the role of learning process and the participants have improved considerably. These changes have enabled to see learning in terms of language in use which leads foreign language teachers to take into account the development of communicative skills. Such skills are carried out in interaction and allow students to be able to communicate in their foreign language as they do in their native language. Then, it is vital to consider theories of communicative competence that emphasize the importance of interacting as human beings use language in various contexts to negotiate meaning.

In this respect, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) published by the Council of Europe in 2001, describes language learners' ability in terms of speaking, reading, listening and writing at six reference levels. It emphasizes learners' communicative needs, including dealing with the affairs of everyday life, exchanging information and ideas, and achieving wider and deeper intercultural understanding. This is

to be achieved by basing teaching and learning on the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of learners.

Accordingly, the CEFR's communicative action oriented approach is based on the model of language use and language learning involving communication of meanings which are important to learners in order to achieve goals. For this reason, many educators find the CEFR useful in that it describes in a comprehensive way, what language students should learn to do, in order to use a language effectively for communication.

In conformity with educational policies in Mexico, the concern about the importance of learning a foreign language is visible, since national education admits that the mastery of foreign languages is a competence that enables graduates to have labor competitiveness, the access to technology and research as well as cognitive development and school performance (SEP, 2006)

As a result, Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) recognizes the need to incorporate English course plans and curriculum of preschool and primary education, and make adjustments in English for secondary through National English Program in Basic Education (2010) (PNIEB for its initials in Spanish), so that when students complete their secondary education, they have already developed multilingual and multicultural skills they need to successfully meet the communication challenges of the globalized world, build a broad view of linguistic and cultural diversity worldwide, and respect their own culture and that of the others.

Together with these ideas, in Puebla State the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla through the Modelo Universitario Minerva (MUM) presents a social-participative curriculum based on constructivism, which takes into account five transversal lines; being one of them "languages". It conceives language as a factor of humanization seen not only

as a capacity more of human beings but the primordial engine of its humanization; it works conforming the thought, let the individuals know their physic and social reality, interact with them and communicate with other people. Consequently, it is the principal mechanism of socialization, the process from which the schemes, values, prejudices and stereotypes of a determined community are incorporated (BUAP, 2007).

Along these lines, UNESCO (cited in BUAP, 2007) establishes that language in the curriculum is the means of communication for the transmission of knowledge. Hence, to learn a second language opens the access to other systems of values, ways to interpret the world and cultural comprehension. It is for this reason that the accreditation of a foreign language becomes very vital in the integral formation of a college student.

In sum, efforts have been made, so that the conceptions of language learning are carried out much more interactive, functional and communicative by teachers and learners. This has led to reassess the interaction related to the conversations in which learners find opportunities to create knowledge, while meaning is negotiated to get a mutual understanding when solving a task in the classroom.

1.1 Justification

Meaning negotiation is an inherent process of language in use and it enables people to convey meaning in their daily communication. For Nunan (2004), it should be noted that negotiation of meaning is a natural aspect of everyday oral interaction, so natural in fact, that society rarely notices doing it.

Then, if effective communication is the goal in the learning and teaching of foreign languages and this process enables to achieve it in the native language, subsequently it becomes important to explore the characteristics and elements involved in the meaning negotiation process when learning a foreign language.

In this sense, within the field of second language acquisition this process has been widely studied recognizing interaction as an important vehicle for second language acquisition as represented by studies on negotiation of meaning. As a result, important data and many empirical studies (Pica & Doughty, 1985; Pica, 1994; Ma, 2004, etc.) have contributed to gather special characteristics of meaning negotiation and relate them with the learning process and interlocutor's productions (Muñoz, 2000).

Thus, as a result of a search for investigation papers about negotiation of meaning in Mexican Universities, it was found that there are few data about this process; for example at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla Languages Faculty there was found only one MA thesis about meaning negotiation. Thus, the fact to explore such process in this institution is considered pertinent given the fact that it will enable to observe the quality of interaction within the English Language classroom, document the characteristics of meaning negotiation and in future, will allow to design more specific studies on their impact on the results of the learning process.

1.2 Significance of the study

This research has taken hold in the field of second language acquisition, because it has reassessed the importance of interaction between individuals involved in the process. Thus, although this project does not focus on finding the direct impact that meaning negotiation process has on learning outcomes (Pica, Young & Doughty, 1987; Gass & Varonis, 1989; Loshky, 1994), it is known that, observing how this process occurs in the oral interactions among students and the teacher will have a valuable input to explain what happens in the classroom and thus improve the performance of the courses. That is to say, the outcomes of this study will confirm its relevance for language teaching practice giving important standpoints underlying teaching and learning perspectives of teachers and students respectively.

1.3 Research aim

The objective of this study is to observe the meaning negotiation process and identify its characteristics in oral interactions in the Target Language IV with university students of the BUAP Languages Faculty.

1.4 Research Questions

Which are the characteristics of meaning negotiation present in the Target language IV class with university students of the BUAP Languages Faculty?

1.5 Methodology

This study has a qualitative approach because a description of the phenomenon previously mentioned will be presented. That is to say, it is exploratory because this research tries to understand the process of negotiation in the context of the target language class at the BUAP Languages Faculty; it is formative given that the results are going to be observed during the development and it will use an observational methodology in view of the fact

that students from the target language IV class will be recorded to identify the ways of negotiation given in this class.

1.6 Key Terms

Language: Language is a systematic resource for expressing meaning in context and linguistics, according to Halliday, is the study of how people exchange meanings through the use of language (Chapelle, 2008).

Input: In second Language acquisition is the language that the learner hears or sees that is used to communicate a message (Vanpatten, 1996).

Task: A “task is a classroom activity or exercise that has an objective attainable only by the interaction among participants, a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction, and a focus on meaning exchange; a language learning endeavor that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate, and/or produce the target language as they perform some set of workplans” (Lee, 2000:32).

Interaction: “Interaction is the process referring to “face-to-face” action. It can be either verbal channeled through written or spoken words, or non-verbal, channeled through touch, proximity, eye-contact, facial expressions, gesturing, etc.” (Robinson, 1994 cited in Tuan & Nhu, 2010)

Meaning: “Meaning is identified as the conceptualization associated with linguistic expressions” (Langacker, 2008:4)

Meaning Negotiation: Within the second language field, Negotiation is one of a range of conversational processes that facilitate Second Language Acquisition as learners work to understand and express meaning in the second language (Foster & Snyder, 2005).

Comprehension: Along with the comprehension hypothesis by Krashen, it is presented when people understand messages, the capacity that people have to understand what other says and what they read (Krashen, 2004).

Chapter II: Literature Review

In this chapter meaning negotiation in the foreign language learning is addressed as a particular process and hence inserted within the extended framework of negotiation in the learning of any language. To do so, it is required to talk about meaning negotiation as an inherent function process of language in use. This leads us to take into account a cognitive perspective on this issue. Besides and given the fact that language in use and negotiation occur in dialogue, this last will be taken into account.

Dialogue and communication involved will be placed in the context of English teaching and learning, assuming that doing so, language is being built. This opens the door to discuss the pedagogical perspective, the importance of communicative approach and the constructivist model.

Thus, concepts about theories and approaches to knowledge and foreign language learning such as constructivism, social constructivism and communicative language learning and task based approach respectively are taken into account since their most central claims are the collaborative construction of knowledge, the development of communicative competence and the use of meaningful tasks in interaction.

2.1 Definition of language

In ancient times, the philosophers of Greece argued and debated questions dealing with the origin and nature of language. The Greeks and Romans also wrote grammars and discussed the sounds of language and the structures of words and sentences. In India, Panini's Sanscrit grammar dated ca. 500 BCE is still considered to be one of the greatest scholarly

linguistic achievements. And this interest continued through the medieval period and the renaissance in an unbroken thread to the present period (Fromkin, et al., 2000).

During the nineteenth century, important scholars from different perspectives turned their attention to many aspects of language and language use giving some important conceptions of language. To illustrate this, Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, saw language as a social phenomenon understood as a different sign system which belongs to different ideas (Lust, & Foley, 2004). Along with him, the social aspect of using language or speech was called parole, while the underlying knowledge of linguistic structure was known as language.

In America, the anthropologist Edward Sapir mainly interested in the language of the Americas, language and culture, and language in society, defined language as a purely human and not instinctive method to communicate ideas, emotions and wishes throughout voluntarily produced symbols (Lust, & Foley, 2004).

In the 20th century, Noam Chomsky ushered in the area of generative grammar which concerns with the biological basis for the acquisition representation and use of human language and the universal principles which constrain the class of all languages. According to his psychological point of view, language is a set of very specific universal principles which are intrinsic properties of the human mind and part of our species' genetic endowment (Downes, 1998).

In terms of social functions, Michael Halliday calls language a “social semiotic” that is to say, on language as a system of signs which are socially motivated or informed in that they have been developed to express social meanings (Widdwson, 1996).

As it can be observed the definitions above presented have tried to explain language and have contributed to the linguistics field as well. However, precisely because they are different perspectives, there is not a general concept of language. Indeed, given the fact it has been difficult to meet a general definition some authors prefer to characterize or describe the notion of language, rather than define it. Therefore, Justice (2004:56) states: “we can describe language as a complex system involving ideas and expressions, stated another way, when we use language we put thoughts (ideas) into words (the expressions)”.

For all the above, even though there is not a general definition of what language is what is a fact is that our lives are filled with language. As it is stated by Grace (2007:30), “we use it to describe the world around us, to negotiate our way through the complex situations and relationships of our lives and for the simplest ones as well”. In addition, the way we use language defines us to the people around us. Language is not just a tool for communication but an intrinsic aspect of our identity. For this reason, it is important to explore the capacity to construct meaning in another language.

2.2 Meaning and Communication

The centrality of Meaning has been the objective of some approaches that explain language through the characteristics of cognition, giving at the same time new insights to language learning. In this sense, cognitive linguistics is an enterprise or an approach that places central importance of the role of meaning, conceptual process and embodied experience in the study of language and the mind and the way in which they intersect; the two best developed sub-branches of cognitive linguistics are cognitive semantics and cognitive approaches to grammar (Evans, 2007).

According to Langacker (2008:4) “meaning is identified as the conceptualization associated with linguistic expressions”. That is to say, “meaning –construction is conceptualization”, this is the fourth of the guiding principles of cognitive semantics which asserts that “language itself does not encode meaning. Instead, words (and other linguistic units) are treated as prompts for the construction of meaning which takes place at the conceptual level” (Evans, 2007:130). To put it differently, conceptualization is the process that enables human beings to construct and identify patterns present in the world and gained by experience whose representation ends up in linguistic expressions.

Pursuant to Langacker (2008), since conceptualization is grounded in physical reality, clearly there must be something inside the head of the speaker, while everything may be negotiable, something has to be learned and conventionalized as basis for negotiation. So, even though the meaning of an expression resides in the conceptualizing activity of individual speakers, we cannot deny the social aspect of linguistic meaning, since an individual’s notion of what an expression means is developed through communicative interaction, being negotiated by interlocutors based on mutual assessment of their knowledge, thoughts and intentions (Langacker, 2008). In other words, everything humans know about the world is certainly shared and negotiated. Otherwise there would not exist established knowledge and hence chaos in knowledge.

In sum, meanings derive from embodied human experience, rather than being fixed and predetermined; they are actively negotiated by interlocutors on the basis of the physical, linguistic, social and cultural context, and are not localized but distributed over the entire speech community, which means that they are emerging dynamically in discourse and social interaction among people (Langacker, 2008).

As a result, Littlemore (2009) states that the language that we encounter everyday serves as input from which we can draw inferences about form-meaning relationship, typical patterns and schemata. According to her, we constantly modify our lexicon in response to the new language that we hear and use. Language knowledge and learning are thus usage-based in that our knowledge of language is derived from and informed by language used. The fact that we use language in interactive settings and that we use contextual cues to work out what our speaker is trying to say, is an important part of this process.

Hence, in foreign language learning and teaching, it would not have to be different if it is argued that the mastery of the foreign language will allow students the access to a new communication system, in which they will have to be able to use their communicative abilities to interpret the world when constructing, transmitting or receiving knowledge.

On this basis, the importance of language in use is essential not only in our native language but, in the foreign one as well, since communication is the result of this process, given the fact that communication is the fundamental process in which both interaction and representation are involved. Kress and Vann Leeuwen (2001) affirm that by communicating we interact, we do something to or for or with people. However, none of these communicative activities can exist without being linked to some form of representational content not only in language but also in all other modes. Thus, it is important to look at dialogue that according to several scholars has important features that foster effective communication.

2.3 Dialogue

One of the four components of communicative competence is the one involving discourse. For Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000), discourse refers primarily to the language forms that are produced or interpreted as people communicate with each other. They state that a piece of discourse is an instance of spoken or written language that has describable internal relationships of form and meaning that relate coherently to an external communicative function or purpose and a given audience/interlocutor and context. In other words, in our everyday life, every time we want to communicate something selecting the appropriate structures and sentences taking into account our interlocutors and context, we are making use of discourse which leads us to conclude that discourse is language in use.

Hence, given the fact that discourse is the vehicle of communication, it is important to mention that not all of the kind of talks or conversations let people communicate in a reflexive and analytical way allowing them to create valuable new knowledge in their lives. And even more important in learning and teaching, since in line with new perspectives in education, it is expected to have competent students with reflexive and analytical abilities being able to create new knowledge each other. Then, it is very remarkable to talk about dialogue.

Forasmuch, Vella (1995) states that for teachers, it is vital to remember that it is in dialogue that learning takes place. Conforming to her, dialogue assumes two human beings as subjects of their own learning, sharing research, data experience and questions to transform both their own learning and the very knowledge they are examining. For Burbles (1999), the fact that the teacher is willing to foster the space for dialogue in teaching will let

express and create new comprehensions, reflect about ethic or political norms and amplify our comprehension of the world and knowledge.

Wherefore, in consonance with Fernandez and Osorio (2004), the conception of dialogue must transcend the classical conception, in which teachers ask and students answer or vice versa in order to focus on dialogue as a communicative act given in a time and space that are conduct to teachers and students to introduce issues that are appropriate to their race, creed, ethnicity and gender to achieve a mutual understanding to build new meanings in a climate of respect and freedom.

On that account, as it is reported by The Digest (Scott,2009) produced by the Australian Council for Educational Research “Dialogic Teaching” is characterized by comparatively lengthy interactions between a teacher and student or group of students in a context of collaboration and mutual support. These interactions can occur in the context of a whole class, group or one on one learning activities and are designed to help the child to build understanding, explore ideas and practice thinking through and expressing concepts.

During these interactions teachers deliberately model and explicitly teach strategies for reasoning, enquiry and negotiation, among others. Alexander (2006 cited in Scott, 2009) has described dialogical teaching as: Collective, which means that teachers and students carry out tasks collaboratively; Reciprocal, where students and teachers listen to each other and share ideas; Supportive, which means that children articulate their ideas freely, without fear of embarrassment over wrong answers and they help each other to reach common understanding; Cumulative, which implies that teachers and children built their own and each other’s ideas and chain them into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry and,

purposeful which means that teachers plan and facilitate dialogic teaching with particular educational goals in view.

As it is noticed, the conception of dialogue is reflexive, critical and creative that is supported on the informal experience of students to get constituted in a deep dialogue sustained on argumentation and reflection. This kind of dialogic communication can deepen the various issues related to both content of their subject matters of study as well as the set of phenomena of their reality and experiences that are important to them, for their personal development and integrity (García,1999).

Ergo, it can be said that human beings communicate meanings, which are construed in language, and the ways they do it to achieve a successful communication in real situations, not only among native speakers but among learners of foreign languages, has led researchers to explore at their best the features of meaning and dialogue as inherent elements to the communication process within the framework of foreign teaching and learning. Now, it is also important to look at general theories of knowledge and learning that have given valuable standpoints to the way in which students cognitively and socially process new information and learning.

2.4 Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory about knowledge and learning and it is based mainly on the work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky; it describes both what “knowing” is and how one “comes to know”. Learning from this perspective is viewed as a self-regulatory process of struggling with the conflict between existing personal models of the world and discrepant new insights, constructing new representations and models of reality as a human meaning-

making venture with culturally developed tools and symbols, and further negotiating such meaning through cooperative social activity, discourse, and debate (Fosnot,1996).

Although constructivism is not a theory of teaching, it has had a wide ranging impact on learning theories and teaching methods in education and is an underlying theme of many education reform movements. A constructivist view of learning suggests an approach to teaching that gives learners the opportunity for concrete, contextually meaningful experience through which they can search for patterns, raise their own questions, and construct their own models, concepts and strategies. The classroom in this model is seen as a minisociety, a community of learners engaged in activity, discourse and reflection (Fosnot, 1996).

As we examine factors related to the construction of knowledge, we find two focal points: that of cognitive constructivism and that of social constructivism. Cognitive constructivism focuses on the cognitive process associated with constructing knowledge as individuals make sense of new information with which they are confronted. Social constructivist concerns themselves with the social and cultural processes at work (Windschitl, 2002 cited in Reyes & Vallone, 2008).

Thereupon, analyzing constructivist elements, it can be observed that they suggest complex environments involving a challenge to learning and authentic task, social negotiation and shared responsibility as part of learning, multiple representations of content, comprehension of elaborated content, and student centered instruction among others (Woolfolck, 2005, cited in Pimienta, 2007).

It was the dialectic between the individual and society and thus the effect of social interaction, language and culture on learning that became the focus of Vygotsky's work, and this precisely will be the key idea on social constructivism.

2.5 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is a variety of cognitive constructivism that emphasizes the collaborative nature learning. Vygotsky was a cognitivist, but rejected the assumption made by cognitivists such as Piaget and Perry that it was possible to separate learning from its social context. He argued that all cognitive functions originate in, and must therefore be explained as products of social interactions and that learning was not simply the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners; it was the process by which learners were integrated into a knowledge community (GSI, 2005).

Nowadays, constructivism theories about learning foster the interest on collaboration and collaborative learning since it has been observed the value of group discussions to help participants to check, to elaborate and explain their knowledge. The implementation of processes that support information processing and memory because when team members ask questions and give explanations have to organize their knowledge, make connections and reviews (Pimienta, 2007). That is to say, social interaction is important to learning because it is through this process that important cognitive functions are originated and then internalized by individuals. Such mental functions are reasoning, comprehension and critical thinking.

Therefore, in agreement with Reyes and Vallone (2008), constructivist practice for English Language Learners resonates with language development approaches that are

focused and using language for meaningful purposes as opposed to more traditional methods of language learning that focus on grammar, language drills and direct instruction.

2.6 Communicative Language Teaching

The Communicative Language Teaching is generally regarded as an approach to language teaching and it was originated during the first years of the decade of the 70's of the last century and emerged in Europe as reaction to the Audio-lingual and Oral methods; it is based on the theory that the primary function of language use is communication and its primary goal is for learners to develop communicative competence (Sanchez, 2009).

Similarly, the British Council (2014) notes that the communicative approach is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language.

To such a degree, the communicative approach opens up a wider perspective on language. In particular, it makes us consider language not only in terms of its structures but also in terms of the communicative functions that it performs. And talking about language learning, it makes us more strongly aware that it is not enough to teach learners how to manipulate the structures of the foreign language, they must also develop strategies for relating these structures to their communicative functions in real situations and real time (Littlewood, 1995).

In sum, the importance of this approach lies on the fact that this is a student-centered teaching approach focused on real communication and meant a perspective that

left behind traditional approaches focused on memorization, not in language in use. In this manner, Nunan (2004) asserts that it has had profound effect on both methodology and syllabus designed and has greatly enhanced the status of the concept task within the curriculum. Along to him, Task-Based approach language teaching represents a realization of this philosophy at the levels of syllabus design and methodology.

2.7 Task-Based Approach

Task -Based learning offers an alternative for language teachers since it emphasizes the use of authentic language through meaningful tasks, which means that it can help students by placing them in a situation like in the real world where oral communication is essential for doing a specific task. Along with the British Council (2014) in a task-based lesson the teacher does not pre-determine what language will be studied, the lesson is based around the completion of a central task and the language studied is determined by what happens as the students complete it.

Hereby, Task-Based learning has the advantage of getting students to use their skills at their current level to help develop language through its use. Thus, in this approach it is important that the teacher produces and supplies different tasks which will give the learner the opportunity to experiment spontaneously, individually and originally with the foreign language as well as to expose students to as much of it (POOLS-M, 2009).

In the opinion of Lee (2000:32), a “task is a classroom activity or exercise that has an objective attainable only by the interaction among participants, a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction, and a focus on meaning exchange; a language

learning endeavor that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate, and/or produce the Target Language as they perform some set of workplans”.

In this sense, Willis (1996) affirms that each task should have a specific outcome with the main purpose of exchanging meanings not producing specific language forms. Consistent with this, Lightbrown and Spada (1999:50) declare that “when learners are given the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities they are compelled to ‘negotiate for meaning,’ that is, to express and clarify their intentions, thoughts, opinions, etc., in a way which permits them to arrive at a mutual understanding. This is especially true when the learners are working together to accomplish a particular goal . . .” This means that the key idea on meaningful tasks is the promoting of useful interaction in the target language since it fosters learning opportunities.

2.8 Interaction

According to Ellis (1990) interaction is meaning –focused and is carried out to facilitate the exchange of information and prevent communication breakdowns. In addition, “theories of communicative competence emphasize the importance of interaction as human beings use language in various contexts to negotiate meaning, or simply stated to get one idea out of your head and into the head of another person or vice versa” (Brown, 1994:159). Therefore, if interaction is important in our everyday life it is really worth seeing the way it works in the classroom and in the foreign language teaching and learning, since the aim of learning a language is to use it in communication.

In this sense, for Allwright (1984:156, cited in Alcón, 1994), interaction is “fundamental fact of classroom pedagogy” because “everything happening in the classroom

happens through a process of live person-to-person interaction”. Bearing this in mind, through their interactions with each other, teachers and students construct a common body of knowledge. They also create mutual understanding of their roles and relationships, and the norms and expectations of their involvement as members in the classroom. Then, we might see classroom interaction as a two-way process between the participants in the learning process, where the teacher influences the learners and vice versa.

2.8.1 Teacher-Student Interaction

Generally, the teacher-student interaction is established when a teacher talks to the whole class, small groups or individuals at the same time. In traditional classes, the teacher controls the topic for classroom talk and determines when start and stop talking in the classroom (Cazden, 1988; Tsui, 1995 cited in Tuan & Nhu, 2010). Besides, mostly, the teacher asks questions to learners and learners answer the questions. According to Thornbury (1996), this typical interaction pattern in the teacher dominated language classroom follows the Initiation- Response-Feedback (IRF) sequence, which makes the lesson less communicative. Unless, as Wells (1993) declares, the feedback from the teacher is utilized to ask students to extend their thinking, justify, clarify their ideas or make links with their own experience. Thus, only in this way this pattern supplies learners with more opportunities for meaning negotiation (Tuan & Nhu, 2010).

Therefore, even though the teacher controls and decides the type and process of the activity, in the opinion of Brown (2001), the teacher must take the role of facilitator to have a better interaction. In this way, teachers need to assist their students to “explore ideas both individually and collectively” (Churchill et al., 2011:264) while lecturing, explaining a new

grammar concept on the board, having a whole-class discussion, choral drilling or asking individual students questions.

In such a way, Nunan (2004) asseverates that the teacher is available as source of guidance and help; his presence in this capacity may be an important psychological support for many learners especially for those who are slow to develop independence.

2.8.2 Student-Student Interaction

The student-student interaction is also called 'pair work'. According to Harmer (2001), pair work increases the amount of talking available to every learner in the classroom. It allows learners to interact independently without the necessary guidance of the teacher. Thus, this cooperation helps the classroom become a more relaxed and friendly place (Tuan & Nhu, 2010) and the teacher holds the role of a consultant or adviser, helping when necessary (Liberante, 2012). Therefore, the main purpose of this interaction is the fact of how well students communicate each other to have an outcome.

That is to say, in classes where interaction among students is fostered, there are more opportunities to build their knowledge. Besides, collaborative learning becomes important since, it is through collaboration that students work each other without any feeling of competitiveness or individualism; as learners are responsible for one another's learning as well as their own. Hence, the success of one learner helps other students to be successful (JTE, 1995). This means that the extent to which group work results in cooperative learning through collaborative interaction depends on the frequency of communicative interaction (Mercer, 2004). Moreover, Daughy and Pica (1986, cited in Tuan & Nhu, 2010) affirm that group work is more likely to lead to meaning negotiation

that interaction with the teacher. Then, for this reason, it is important to consider the quality of students' talk promoted by interaction in the classroom.

In this sense, theorists place different values on the role of interaction in Second Language Acquisition. The basic types of interaction in the light of three different SLA theoretical perspectives discussed by Ellis are: Interaction Hypothesis, Sociocultural Theory and the depth of processing Theory (Ariza & Hancock, 2003). Since the purpose of this research is to focus on the type of interaction inherent to oral interactions that learners participate in to negotiate meaning, it is necessary to regard the Interactionist Hypothesis.

2.9 Long's Interactionist Hypothesis

Social interaction theory is an approach about language acquisition that stresses the environment and the context in which language is being learned. In this approach, language is a process that constantly integrates the interaction between the human predisposition of using the data of the language in a particular way and the data that the learner finds in his every day experience (Muñoz, 2000).

In the 90's, input and interaction became very important. The proposal of Krashen, in which the acquisition of the L2 depends on a comprehensible input and Long's interactionist approach, impacted on the explanation of how it develops the L1. Long coincided with Krashen on the importance of the comprehensible input but disputed that it was enough and necessary to explain the acquisition and he proceeded to defend in his Interactionist Hypothesis that the modifications in the interactional structure of the conversation constitute the most important and frequent way to make the input comprehensible (Muñoz, 2000).

The Interactionist Hypothesis starts from the basic idea that conversation is not merely a forum for the practice of linguistic forms that language learners have already acquired, but also the means by which learning takes place. Stretches of conversation during which problems of message comprehensibility occur, may be particularly helpful for language learning. These conversational stretches are believed to give rise to all kinds of interactional modifications (Van den Branden, 2000 cited in Philip et al., 2008). Long argues that linguistic conversational adjustments promote comprehensible input because such adjustments are usually triggered by an indication of non-comprehension, requiring the speaker to reformulate his or her utterance to make it more comprehensible (Nunan, 2004).

Therefore, this hypothesis highlights the importance not only of input but of the elements that make it comprehensible. Such process is called meaning negotiation and its main claim is the way in which interlocutors try to understand and be understood to construct their knowledge in the interaction process. Meaning negotiation will be explained in the next section.

2.10 Meaning Negotiation

For Smith (2001, cited in Scott, 2009), language is not merely a tool for describing what one already knows. It is a pervasive process through which we learn about our world and develop our creative and problem solving skills. Thus, the primary use of language is the creation and exchange of meaning; such meaning is created by the interaction of one language user with the other. In this sense, no single language user expresses what he or she means, but simply participates in the creation of negotiated meaning (Lewis, 1993).

Along these lines, Breen and Littlejohn (2000) call personal negotiation to the unobservable and complex mental processing that occurs in our search for understanding and our efforts to be understood. That is to say, when we interpret meaning from what we read or hear, negotiation occurs between the potential meanings of the written or spoken texts, and those meanings which we ourselves can attribute and interpret to that text from our previous knowledge and experience (Widdowson, 1978, cited in Breen & Littlejohn, 2000).

Therefore, in current theories of Second Language Acquisition, negotiation of meaning is a crucial concept. Beginning more than two decades ago with work by Wagner-Gough and Hatch (1975) and developed in the following years by many researchers, Second Language has emphasized the role played by negotiated interaction between Native Speakers and Non Native Speakers and between two Non Native Speakers in the development of a second language (Gass, 1997), pointing out that in conversations involving NNSs, negotiations are frequent.

According to Ellis (1985), a major feature of conversations involving L2 learners is that the learner and native speaker together strive to overcome the communicative difficulties which are always likely to arise as a result of the learner's limited L2 resources. Then, when learners interact with native speakers or other learners, they often experience considerable difficulty in communicating; this leads to substantial interactional efforts by the conversational partners to secure mutual understanding. This work is often called meaning negotiation.

Long (1996:182, cited in Mackey & Gass, 2005) defines negotiation as “the process in which, in an effort to communicate, learners and competent speakers provide and interpret signals of their own and their interlocutor's perceived comprehension, thus provoking adjustments to linguistic form, conversational structure, message content, or all three, until an acceptable level of understanding is achieved”

Pica (1994:495) defined meaning negotiation as: “... the modification and restructuring of interaction that occurs when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility. As they negotiate, they work linguistically to achieve the needed comprehensibility, whether repeating a message verbatim, adjusting its syntax, changing its words or modifying its form and meaning in host of other ways” and for Gass and Selinker (2008) meaning negotiation refers to those instances in conversation when participants need to interrupt the flow of the conversation in order for both parties to understand what the conversation is about.

In other words, when interlocutors negotiate meaning, that variety of modifications, which may involve linguistic simplification as well as conversational modifications such as repetition, clarification, and conformation checks, may be used to gain understanding.

Investigators have identified a four-stage process in the negotiation of meaning. The first stage is a trigger that begins the sequence; the second one is a signal that draws attention to a communication breakdown. Third stage is a response, in which the speaker attempts to repair the miscommunication. More than one response may be needed at this stage to repair the breakdown. Finally, the follow-up marks the closing of the sentence (Pica et al., 1991, cited in Nunan, 2004)

The signals can vary from an opened clarification request, a confirmation check to a comprehension check, which means that interlocutors normally negotiate the meaning by clarifying the productions of interlocutors and theirs and confirming or checking comprehension. Long (1980) described three ways of negotiated interaction (Vanpatten & Williams, 2007), these are: Confirmation check which are expressions that are designed to elicit confirmation that an utterance has been correctly heard or understood. E.g. is this what you mean? ; Comprehension check, expressions that are used to verify that an interlocutor has understood. E.g. did you understand? And Clarification request that are expressions designed to elicit clarification of the interlocutor's preceding utterances. E.g. what did you say?

As reported by Van den Branden (2000, cited in Philip et al., 2008), this is the most restrictive definition of negotiation of meaning since it is based upon purely formal criteria, i.e., on the occurrence of typical interactional devices used by interlocutors during the negotiation of meaning. For this reason, for the author a slightly less restrictive definition would be based on a more functional interpretation of the presence/absence of negotiation of meaning: this would include any side-sequence in the conversation in which the interlocutors temporarily move away from the flow of the conversation in order to make sure that the mutual understanding is still maintained and in the case that this is not, try to repair this.

Therefore, in the agreement with the author, this definition would also include negotiation sequences in which the interlocutors sign non-understanding in non-verbal ways, which lead to regard all human verbal interaction as negotiation of meaning.

Conversation, then, is an ongoing negotiation process during which interlocutors try to establish meaning exchange and find common ground while doing so.

The term meaning negotiation, then refers to the fact that people enter interactional settings with their own perspectives, values, concepts, and so on, and that for communication to run smoothly, people will continuously have to make sure they establish “shared” meaning (Van den Branden, 2000, cited in Philip et al., 2008).

2.10.1 Miscommunication

Coupland et al., (cited in Nunan, 2004) noted “ in the ethno-methodological tradition, language use, the making of meaning and its reconstruction has been viewed as inherently problematic, strategic, and effortful” In consequence, the problem becomes more complex when dealing with non-native speakers where miscommunication abounds and where communication in general is doubly problematic and effortful.

Thus and so, negotiation refers to communication in which participants’ attention is focused on resolving a communication problem as opposed to communication in which there is a free-flowing exchange of information. As a result, meaning negotiation has to do with communicative difficulties, problems of message comprehensibility and non-comprehension and all of them refer to miscommunication.

Following Milroy (1984, cited in Gass, 1997), miscommunication is defined as instances in which there is a mismatch between a speakers’ intention and a hearer’s interpretation. As subcategories of miscommunication Gass and Varonis (1991, cited in Gass, 1997) distinguished misunderstandings which implies different semantic analysis by

the speaker and the hearer, and incomplete understandings in which one or more participants perceive that something has gone wrong.

Along these authors by the far the largest numbers of communicative events of incomplete understandings are those in which there is some sort of negotiation to resolve the difficulty. This is because mostly interlocutors start negotiated work since there is a total (non-understanding) or partial (partial understanding) failure to understand the message.

2.10.2 Tasks Fostering Meaning Negotiation

In SLA, negotiation is referred specially to the negotiation of meaning, which is related to the incidental acquisition process in the discursive level which is usually given during the realization of communicative tasks when learning languages. That is to say, the stimulus for modification in the interaction is the interruption of communication in conversations in which the partners seek mutual understanding often with the intention of completing a task (Muñoz, 2000). Accordingly, it is important to look at the role played by tasks in this process.

In his own work Long (1996) found that two-way tasks in which all students in a group had unique information to contribute stimulated more meaning negotiation than one way tasks in which one student held all of the information needed to complete the task. Working in a similar tradition, Doughty and Pica (1986, cited in Nunan, 2004) found that required information exchange tasks generated significantly more negotiation than tasks in which the exchange of information was optional.

In other words, Doughy and Pica observed in their study, in which opinion exchange tasks and information gaps activities were compared, that information gap activities stimulated more the negotiated interaction and that most negotiated interaction was generated in information gap activities in the model of participation in small groups. The most important characteristics of these tasks are that they require an equivalent exchange of information among the distinct interlocutors and that the participants provide solutions to work on, so that they can complete the task (Muñoz, 2000).

In an effort to synthesize the large number of studies in this area that had emerged by the early 1990's Pica, Kanagy and Falodun designed a framework incorporating what they saw as the two key features of a task: the interactional activity and the communication goal. Each of these features was broken down into two subsidiary dimensions. Interactional activity consisted of interactant relationship and interactant requirement and communication goal was broken down into outcome options and goal orientation. Pica et al., proposed five basic task types, each of which was unique in terms of the ways in which the features combined. These were the jigsaw task, the information exchange task, the problem solving task, the decision-making task and the opinion exchange task (Nunan, 2004). They also argued that four conditions would maximize opportunities for the negotiation of meaning. Primarily, each interactant must hold a different portion of information which must be exchanged for the task to be successfully completed. Then, with convergent goals in mind they have to interact to have only one acceptable outcome possible.

Consistent with this, if negotiation is the purpose of the task, then it has to be designed to be carried out in small groups and must, in first place, incorporate a requirement of

information exchange so that no participant can avoid interaction and, in second place, have a convergent objective that every participant can recognize when it is achieved (Muñoz, 2000).

2.11 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, Meaning Negotiation is given in oral interactions where two or more interlocutors are participating and need to interrupt the flow of their conversation when there are communication breakdowns. In the classroom, such interlocutors are the teacher and students; the element fostering the process is the task, which must be designed to focus on communicating real meaning enabling students be exposed to as much as the foreign language. Accordingly, the purpose of this investigation is to observe and identify the frequent use of verbal adjustments; being in content or structure of linguistic forms to gain understanding by making comprehension, confirmation checks and clarification requests so that students can build each other shared meaning to achieve the goal of the task. Thus, in the next chapter the methodology used to achieve the purpose of this research will be described.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter presents the qualitative methodology that allowed to develop this degree thesis. As a consequence, the subjects, the instrument and procedures that were used to observe the characteristics of Meaning Negotiation in the target Language IV at BUAP Languages Faculty are explained.

3.1 Research Methodology

Qualitative studies derive data from observation, interviews, or verbal interactions and focuses on the meanings and interpretations of the participants (Holloway & Wheeler, 1995); this kind of approach uses data collection without numerical measurement to discover or refine research questions in the process of interpretation (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2006). In the opinion of Malterud (2001) the aim of such research is to investigate the meaning of social phenomena as experienced by the people themselves. That is to say, qualitative research is an exploration of what is assumed to be a dynamic reality. It does not claim that what is discovered in the process is universal, and thus, replicable (COE, 2006).

Therefore, since the purpose of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the Meaning Negotiation process throughout the description of its characteristics presented in oral interaction in the EFL classroom at BUAP Languages Faculty, this study followed a qualitative approach.

3.2 Participants

Within qualitative studies, participants provide purposeful data according to the needs of the research (Morse, 1991). Accordingly, their background allows a better understanding of what is observed (Bravo & Zaragoza, 2013). Thus, the observed subjects were 30 students from the target language IV from the BUAP Languages faculty. There were 18 women and 12 men between 19 and 20 years old, they mainly were from Puebla City, and they belonged to the 2010 generation. They were chosen according to their English level assuming that with an advanced level they would be able to engage in oral conversations during the class using their communicative skills during the realization of a task. Thus, this study is limited to a single group because of the need of exploring the meaning negotiation process in the BUAP Languages Faculty, since similar theses were not found. Finally, the teacher was a male aged 37 with the degree of English Teaching.

3.3 Instrument

Instrument is the generic term that researchers use for a measurement device (“instrument”, n.d) and it can be interviews, focus groups, narratives among others. Accordingly, Creswell (2009) declares that in qualitative studies, researchers collect data through examining documents, observing behavior or interviewing participants.

Consistent with Given (2008), checklists are used to encourage or verify that a number of specific lines of inquiry, steps, or actions are being taken, or have been taken, by a researcher. For example, checklists might be used by researchers during data collection as a precautionary backup so that they consistently and purposefully take note of a particular phenomenon, then, because of its utility to register and collect important data of the

participants in relation to the meaning negotiation process; the instrument of this research was a Meaning Negotiation Checklist designed by the researcher. The material used to carry out such research was a video recording so that the students could be recorded and the whole setting as well.

The major issues that must be addressed about such process exposed in the literature review are in the checklist. In consequence, a column was assigned to the type of the interaction, task description, type of miscommunication and the definition of the three C`s Meaning Negotiation, so that they could be marked in case they were identified during the class. Besides, there is a column for comments which enabled to write more specific information, while observing the video recordings. In sum, this instrument would indicate the existence of the characteristics of Meaning Negotiation in the Target Language VI class. See appendix A.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

First of all, assuming that it was necessary to have an advanced level of English, the Target Language IV class was chosen. That is to say, participants were chosen due to their English level. Besides, it is in this level in which the language is still taught.

Once the participants were chosen, two videos were obtained, in which the Teacher-Student and the Student-Student interactions were recorded; both lasting about 40 minutes. Talking about the instrument, at the very beginning, it was a Meaning Negotiation Chart which had only the categories with their characteristics. Later, adding some examples of the categories and more elements of this process was suggested, so that they could be clearer to be recognized while identifying them. The first draft is found in appendix B. Finally,

important data was obtained from the designed checklist identifying and marking meaning negotiation characteristics on it.

3.5 Data Analysis

As soon as the videos were ready, it was necessary to watch them carefully to fill the Meaning Negotiation Checklist. Then, once observed the features of the process that occurred in the Target Language VI classroom; it was agreed not to do the entire class transcription, but to transcribe only the parts of the class where the meaning negotiation categories were identified to analyze them according to the meaning negotiation characteristics. Besides, it was also important to take notes of body language and non-verbal language, since these aspects would help in the comprehension of the process.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, the qualitative methodology used in this research favored it, given the fact that there were few studies about the meaning negotiation process and thus, it enabled to look for patterns and hypothesis about such process, as well as gaining insights and familiarity with the subject area for more rigorous investigation later. Therefore, the data analyzed was used to draw important results that will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter IV: Findings

This chapter presents the results obtained in this study. The data that was achieved is now classified and interpreted in the light of the theoretical framework presented in chapter II in order to answer the research question of this investigation.

4.1 Background Knowledge

Communication is present in our everyday life and the fact that human beings use the language to achieve it, it is maybe one of the best inventions that humanity has ever done. However, due to the complexity to communicate meanings every single person has to get into a process that enables them to convey meaning each other so that they can know what they are talking about and then carry out their basic necessities and daily activities. This means, that language is functional and that meaning construction collectively is implicit.

The process mentioned above is called Meaning Negotiation in SLA and in this field it is referred to the process where input is made comprehensible by interlocutors to be understood to achieve the goal of a task. Thus, observing if this phenomenon occurs in the Target Language Classroom VI at BUAP Languages Faculty was the main purpose of this investigation.

Then, two classes were obtained that present the Teacher-Student and the Student-Student interaction given in the Target Language VI class. Thus, to identify the found interactions of both classes, they are labeled as Class A and Class B. Such interactions are described according to the Meaning Negotiation Check List containing elemental categories of such process: a) Type of interaction, b) Task description, c) Misunderstanding and d) the C's Meaning Negotiation description.

4.2 Class A Results

According to the results obtained from the instrument previous explained, in class A the most frequent interaction was the Teacher-Students and some characteristics of meaning negotiation were identified in this class. The next table shows the outcomes.

Table 4.1 Class A Results

Type of interaction	Task	Misunderstanding (trigger)	The C's meaning negotiation
Teacher-Student	Oral presentation: English Teaching Methods, Linguistics, and Second Language Learning presentation	Non-Understanding: partial failure of getting the meaning of the words 'address' and 'eye contact'	<p>Comprehension Check: <i>address the entire audience What does this mean? Talk to every one? what do I mean by eye contact guys?</i></p> <p>Confirmation Check: <i>Catch, yea by addressing or catching the audience, Catching the attention of the audience? Talk to every one as simple as that, ok?</i></p> <p>Clarification Request: <i>What do you mean with [a] contact? Eye contact.</i></p>
Student-Student	Discussion and Oral presentation: Mexican Recipes	Not presented	Not presented
Teacher-Student		Non-Understanding: total failure of getting the meaning of the words 'dice' and 'chop'	<p>Clarification request: <i>What's the meaning of dice? What's the difference between dice and chop?</i></p> <p>Comprehension check: <i>chop, when</i></p>

			<i>you move like 'bateria? That's chop 'papapa' and dice... squares, like little squares.</i>
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It can be observed that during this class both types of interaction are given. The one involving a) Teacher- Student Interaction is given since the teacher talks to the entire class to facilitate and give necessary information to explain a task that students are supposed to carry out the next session, which is an oral presentation about Teaching Methods, Linguistics, and Second Language Learning.

Consequently, b) the teacher gave instructions to prepare it; he gave them the topics and explained the elements they would have to integrate to improve their presentation; he wrote a list of aspects and explained some tips such as 'eye contact', 'addressing the entire audience', the use of 'visual aids' etc. that students must take into account to improve their presentation. It is necessary to clarify that even though it is not a task, it is taken into account since there was non- understanding of some elements presented by students.

Accordingly, the purpose of the task is to put into practice what they have learnt in this class and even in others, since the topics are related to other courses. It is clear that the teacher provides students with chances to participate in an oral presentation to improve their speaking skills.

Even though, the teacher provides students with tasks, which at first sight seem to be "communicative" given the fact that students have to use their speaking skills, he could have not considered that it is necessary to see language not only in terms of its structures

but also in terms of the communicative functions that it performs in real situations and real time (Littlewood, 1995).

Despite of this, c) to make sure students understand what they have to do, the teacher is constantly asking for the meaning of certain words he thinks students could not understand. Then it is observed that the teacher triggers negotiation until an acceptable level of understanding is achieved. Hence, it is in these instances where sequences of meaning negotiation were identified and d) Comprehension check, Confirmation check and Clarification request were presented.

Meaning Negotiation Sequence 1

T: So how will you improve? Number one, read the rubric, ok? That's number one read the rubric, number two, please consider these (he pointed out to the list written on the board). Point number one: "address the entire audience" "what does this mean? (Pointing the word) It is not "dirección" It's a verb, ['æd.res and ə'dres]

S1: catch

T: catch, yea by addressing or catching the audience.

S2: catching the attention of the audience?

S3: (overlapped) be nice

T: yea, be what?

S3: Be nice

T: < the teacher did not listen to him >

S3: nice

T: nice, yea

S4: talk to everyone?

T: Talk to every one as simple as that, ok?

Meaning Negotiation sequence 2

S1: what do you mean with [eɪ] contact? (Pointing out the blackboard) [aɪ] contact well yea, I can stare two guys to the congress in the audience, Do I?

Class: Laughs

T: What do I mean by eye contact guys? (Asking the entire class)

S2: contacto de ojos.

S3. Ojos de contacto.

Class: Laughs

T: I gave you like an example, it's just an analogy. Do you know what a wiper is of a car? These do that (he imitates the movement of a wiper)

Then, once the teacher finished giving instructions about oral presentations; organized the class in teams and to group them, he named each student with the names of fruits. Finally, he asked the ones that had the same fruit to get together to start the next activity.

The teacher explained to them that they were to work on b) a speaking and writing activity. He wrote on the board about six names of traditional Mexican dishes from which teams had to choose one. Then, they had to discuss the elaboration of the chosen dish to describe it in two steps taking into account the ingredients and the process. Finally, they had to write the recipe in a bond paper and present it to the class, participating all of the members of the team to present the recipe, the ingredients and explain the process. All teams had to pay attention and wait for their turn.

Consequently, a) the Student-Student interaction appeared since to solve the task students had to discuss each other what they knew about the Mexican dish they chose. This

means that they had to work collaboratively using their English speaking and writing skills. Nevertheless, once the teacher told them to start working, it is observed that in most of the teams, students started to speak in Spanish to clarify what they had to do and to carry out the task. Besides, mostly the most competent English student was the one who worked on the task. This shows that even though, the main purpose of this interaction is the fact of how well students communicate each other to have an outcome, students just wanted to finish the task and not put into practice their speaking skills, since many of them did not use English unless the teacher was close to them or asked them what they were doing; many of them were even talking about topics not related to the task. This might be because the objectives of the tasks may not be clear, relevant, and functional for them or simply because they do not care about the improvement of their English learning process.

It is pertinent to mention the importance of the participation of the teacher in this interaction, since it is observed that he encouraged the students to speak in English while monitoring them when discussing the elaboration of the recipe, which shows his interest to be available as source of guidance and help as Nunan (2004) states. This means that he indeed created the confidence so that students feel free to ask when they had doubts.

It is observed in a team that even though they were speaking in Spanish for writing the recipe they had to use the correct words to express what they wanted to say, for this reason they asked the teacher for the meaning of 'dice' and then for the difference between 'dice' and 'chop'. Such words represent a total failure in their understanding to write correctly the process of the recipe. Accordingly, the following meaning negotiation sequence was identified in a teacher-student interaction.

Meaning Negotiation sequence 3

S: Teacher (he calls the teacher) what is the meaning of dice?

T: dice? Like (he moves his hands) for example, when you, when you, when you want to put, beef and cut vegetables?

S: I really not cook.

T: no, no, no, but you eat..... carrot and the carrots are not long ones they're like little squares, that's dicing.

S: but what's the difference between dice and chop?

T: chop (he makes the sound 'papapa' moving his hands like if he were playing the drums) when you move like 'bateria? That's chop 'papapa' and dice... squares, like little squares.

S: hahaha ok.

Generally, it can be noticed that even though students were interacting, there were not opportunities to negotiate meaning, since if students did not know how to say something or had doubts about certain words in the target language, they spoke in their native language to convey meaning each other. This means that they avoided those instances where there was lack of comprehension among them in which they had to stop the flow of the conversation to question what is not understood.

This could have happened because students were not given the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities, where they were compelled to 'negotiate for meaning,' that is, to express and clarify their intentions, thoughts, opinions, etc., in a way which permits them to arrive at a mutual understanding (Lightbrown & Spada, 1999).

4.3 Class B results

According to the results obtained from the instrument previously explained, the next table shows the outcomes given in class B where the Student-Student interaction most occurred in the class.

Table 4.2 Class B Results

Type of interaction	Task	Misunderstanding (trigger)	The C's meaning negotiation
Teacher-Students	Group Talk Task	Not presented	Not presented
Student-Student			

At the beginning of the class the a) Teacher-Student interaction took place since the teacher started grouping students in teams, and explained what they were to work on. The b) task consisted of expressing whether they agree or disagree with the five different topics that the teacher was to hand them in.

Consequently, to carry on the task, each team was given a strip with a topic they had to read, think about the reasons why they agree or disagree with it, write them down and finally speak up the reasons to their teams. All the members had to participate and give their opinions. Then, after eight minutes, they had to switch their topic to another team, so that all could talk about the five different situations.

Then, a) the student-student interaction was observed once one member in each team read the topic to their classmates and they listened to him carefully. Students asked

each other questions such as *Do you agree or disagree? Only people who earn a lot of money is successful, is it acceptable for parents to use physical force to discipline their children?*, and other questions related to ghosts, aliens, Bermuda triangle and God.

It is necessary to mention that the objective of the task was not clear. The teacher told them just to express their ideas and write them down because the next class they would work on the information collected. Then, it is assumed that in this class the purpose was speaking and maybe in the next one they would be focused on writing. However, even though the teacher emphasized they had to discuss the topics it was observed that they mainly expressed their beliefs and opinions about the questions listening to each other. Due to this, it can be observed that as long as students were speaking for the teacher the activity was being carried out correctly. This means that mainly students got involved in recitation, a traditional oral interaction which typically involves abbreviated responses for students (Nstrand, 1997). Besides, once again it is seen that he does not take into account that each task should have a specific outcome with the main purpose of exchanging meanings not producing specific language forms (Willis, 1996).

4.4 General Meaning Negotiation Findings

Along with the observations, the next general results were obtained in relation to two potential elements of the process.

Table 4.3 General Findings

Interactions	Task
<p>The T-Ss interaction is frequent in the classes. However, the interaction is mostly reduced to instructions and explanations about the assignments.</p> <p>The teacher provides students with tasks, which at first sight seem to be “communicative” given the fact that students have to use their speaking skills.</p> <p>Students interact but avoid the practice of their English skills since most of the time they spoke in Spanish to carry out the activity.</p>	<p>Tasks did not have a clear objective.</p> <p>Tasks promoted mainly short-answer questions or recitation.</p> <p>For students the realization of the task becomes a pure requirement of participation in each class.</p> <p>The tasks carried out in the classes did not allow students to get involved in meaningful interactions with opportunities to negotiate meaning.</p>
Meaning Negotiation	
<p>Meaning negotiation was identified hardly and mainly in the T-Ss interaction where the teacher was the competent speaker and was the one who made use of modified utterances.</p> <p>Meaning negotiation was not identified in the student-student interaction.</p>	

Accordingly, the characteristics of the process that occurred in the class were comprehension check, confirmation check and clarification request which were identified in short instances of conversations where there were non-understandings. In the following sections the results of each one of the utterances identified as negotiation are described.

4.4.1 Comprehension Check

This category was given within the T-Ss interaction and was identified twice in the first sequence; and once in the second sequence. Then, in the former, it was recognized when the teacher said: “address the entire audience”. In this case, the trigger, which is any production or part of a production that was not understood, was the word “address”. The teacher supposed that this word could be problematic for their students since this word pronounced differently has another meaning. He even pronounced both ways “ə'dres” meaning to speak to someone and “'æd.res” meaning the number of the house or the road where a person lives or works. Thus, he made a comprehension check, which is the signal according to the model, remarking in his utterance the word ə'dres and then asking < *what does it mean?* > which would be the phrase that would help him to know if students have understood the word in this context. He even translates it into Spanish and tells the students it is a verb. It can be observed how by giving more clues, the teacher simplifies his speech so that students can understand better.

Later, this category is identified in the tenth turn with the S4's question < *talk to every one?* > since the student wanted to see if he has understood from the previous guesses. In other words, in this case the student makes a comprehension check because the

expression was designed to establish whether the teacher and classmate’s preceding utterances were understood by him.

In the following chart, the first sequence is presented within the meaning negotiation model. The productions which correspond to the comprehension category are marked in bold.

Table 4.4 Sequence 1: Comprehension Check

Trigger	Signal	Answer	Reaction
address	Comprehension check T: “Address the entire audience “what does this mean?”	S1: Catch	Confirmation check T: catch, yea by addressing or catching the audience.
		Confirmation check S2: Catching the attention of the audience?	T:Yea
		S3: Be nice	T: Nice, yea
		Comprehension check S4: Talk to every one?	Confirmation check T: Talk to every one as simple as that, ok?

Within the second sequence this category was identified only once. The concept had already been explained, for this reason the teacher asked the whole class. Thus, the comprehension check category was identified in < *What do I mean by eye contact guys?*> ,

because in here the teacher clearly designed it to see whether his previous explanation was understood. However, the answers of the students were not exactly the responses.

On the other hand they were more like joking since they translated literally the concept. Hence, the teacher gave an analogy to explain the concept to the student < *Do you know what a wiper is of a car. These do that (imitating the car's wiper)*>. What the teacher wanted to say with this was that they should look at the entire audience not only a part of it. As a consequence, it is seen how he simplifies his explanation with an analogy.

In the following chart, the conversation is presented within the meaning negotiation model. The productions which correspond to the comprehension check category are marked in bold.

Table 4.5 Sequence 2: Comprehension Check

Trigger	Signal	Answer	Reaction
Eye contact	Clarification request S: What do you mean with [aɪ] contact? Eye contact.	Comprehension check T: What do I mean by eye contact guys?	S2: Ojos de contacto S3: contacto de ojos
		T: I gave you like an example, it's just an analogy. Do you know what a wiper is of a car. This do that (imitating the car's wiper)	

4.4.2 Confirmation Check

This category was given within the T-Ss interaction and three times was identified in the first sequence, in the third, fourth and in the last turn. In the conversation, there is the participation of four students which mainly follow the sequence. Hence, once there was an interruption of the communication, students start to negotiate by giving some words which they believed meant the word “address”. S1 gives his guess < *catch* > and the teacher makes a confirmation check as a reaction < *catch, yea by addressing or catching the audience* >. It can be observed that the teacher makes the sentence repeating the word the student said. That it is to say, the teacher confirms that this word can be the same as “address”, Then, in the fourth turn S2 reformulates this in a question < *Catching the attention of the audience?* >. In his question he repeats the complete sentence to confirm, since he wants to be secure that the word “catch” is close in meaning, whose teacher’s reaction is < *yea* > but the tone he uses let students suppose there are more words which are closer in meaning, so students keep on guessing.

The third student’s guess is < *be nice* >; the teacher accepts the word but showing there could have another that best fixes the meaning. Thus, to the teacher, the student four’s comprehension check < *Talk to every one?* > showed him it was understood. Hence, his reaction is a confirmation check because he repeats all the utterance < *talk to every one* > and he even adds < *as simple as that, ok?* > which means that it is indeed the meaning of the word “address” which had been the trigger of the process.

In the following chart, the conversation is presented within the meaning negotiation model. The productions which correspond to the confirmation check category are marked in bold.

Table 4.6 Sequence 1: Confirmation Check

Trigger	Signal	Answer	Reaction
address	Comprehension check T: “Address the entire audience “what does this mean?”	S1: Catch	Confirmation check T: Catch, yea by addressing or catching the audience.
		Confirmation check S2: Catching the attention of the audience?	T: Yea
		S3: Be nice	T: Nice, yea
		Comprehension check S4: Talk to every one?	Confirmation check T: Talk to every one as simple as that, ok?

4.4.3 Clarification Request

This category was given in the T-Ss interaction and was identified only once in the second sequence and the third sequence. In the second sequence the process started when a student asked for the meaning of “eye contact”. The teacher had already explained it to students,

but this one was late. So, to understand what the teacher was explaining he observed the blackboard and read the list. Thus, he asked for something he did not understand.

In this case, the trigger was “eye contact” and this category was the signal identified in *< What do you mean with [ai] contact? Eye contact>*. In this sense, he does not want to clarify what the teacher said about this point, but to clarify the notion of the concept he had. He had an idea about this concept and in his following phrase, he tries to explain himself *<well yea, I can stare two guys to the congress in the audience, Do I?>*. The student shows he more or less understands it giving an example but with the question, it is observed he is not secure. So, he made a clarification request.

In the following chart, the conversation is presented within the meaning negotiation model. The productions which correspond to the clarification request category are marked in bold.

Table 4.7 Sequence 2: Clarification Request

Trigger	Signal	Answer	Reaction
Eye contact	Clarification request S: What do you mean with [ai] contact? Eye contact.	Comprehension check T: What do I mean by eye contact guys?	S2: Ojos de contacto S3: contacto the ojos
		T: I gave you like an example, it's just an analogy. Do you know what a wiper is of a car?. This do that (imitating the car's wiper)	

Finally, in the third sequence clarification request was identified in the first and fifth turn. In this case the trigger was the partial failure of getting the meaning of the words ‘dice’ and ‘chop’. Students seemed to be confused about the meaning of both words so the first phrase to elicit clarification was *<what’s the meaning of dice?>*. The teacher tried to explain the meaning with examples about food. However, the student did not get the idea, that is why he designed another question *<What is the difference between dice and chop?>* here the teacher tries to give more specific examples with dice and chop, he even made use of movements to explain chop and gave as an example the way drummers play. The student finalized the sequence signing that he understood with *< haaa ok >*. However, in the video his expression showed he was not completely sure about the meaning.

Table 4.8 Sequence 3: Clarification Request

Trigger	Signal	Answer	Reaction
Dice	Clarification request S: Teacher what’s the meaning of dice?	T: dice? Like for example, when you, when you, when you want to put, beef and ?	S: I really not cook.
		T: no, no, no, but you eat..... carrot and the carrots are not long ones they’re like little squares, that’s dicing.	
Chop	Clarification request S: But what’s the difference between dice and chop?	T: chop when you move like ‘bateria? That’s chop ‘papapa’ and dice... squares, like little squares.	S: haaa ok.

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

In sum up, this chapter presents the results observed in the video recordings and registered in the meaning negotiation checklist. Such results are mainly based in the meaning negotiation characteristics explained in chapter two and showed that the type of interaction and task are very important elements so that meaning negotiation can be reached. On one hand, both interactions are given, but the T-Ss interaction is frequently identified in instructions only and the Ss-Ss is less frequent and generally avoiding the use of the foreign language. On the other hand, tasks became a pure requirement of class participation without taking into account that this is what foster interaction and hence opportunities to negotiate meaning.

Chapter V: Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter is to present the general conclusions about this research project which has to do with the identification of the characteristics of the meaning negotiation process in the target language IV. Besides, the limitations and directions for further research are described in detail.

5.1 Meaning Negotiation Conclusion

The objective of this study was to observe which meaning negotiation characteristics were present in the Target Language class IV. Thus, specifically such process is referred in the classroom to those conversational adjustments in interaction made by students and teachers so that they can build and share meaning to achieve the goal of the task. However, meaning negotiation did not occur. To put it in a different way, during the class students interacted but not with the purpose to negotiate meaning.

Accordingly, it is clear that there is interaction without negotiation and it is manifested in different ways: students do not put into practice their speaking skills and hence they do not face the task with responsibility, intense deep and eager to learn and use the language. In this respect, it seems to be possible that the tasks are not suitable or the ways to accomplish them avoid the use of the English Language.

Therefore, it appears to be that students do not use the language because the development of the class does not revolve around the use of language, since much of the session takes place in a directive way, without fostering an intense process of dialogue. This suggests thinking about the conception of the teacher, of the ways to teach language

and even about the very nature of it, because as it is traditionally seen, language is learned only by talking.

Moreover, it is important to take into account the students, since they are not willing to use language and in consequence they only fulfill the task without committing to it. This is indicative of many things: lack of motivation, lack of metacognitive skills and autonomy, flowing into a traditional performance that has to do with a passive role of students being merely receptors of information.

In sum, it is a complex process where conceptions about language teaching and learning, language itself, teaching practices and student achievement are blended. Hence, even though meaning negotiation seems to be based only on the frequency of certain verbal adjustments in oral interactions, it is a fact that it is a process that enables teachers and students to explore a new dimension of language activity in the class that mainly would lead them to achieve communicative competence as it is expected in current educational settings. In addition, it is grounded in language in use since its purpose is enhancing communication to transmit and construct shared knowledge which is congruent with constructivist theories.

Thus, for all the above, the next reflection is derived from this research project: as a matter of principle, it is indispensable to open a wide discussion in the bosom of the community of the faculty about the forms and processes of teaching and learning the language from the level of the teaching practice. As well as also about the theories well-known and sustained by teachers and pupils.

5.2 Limitations of the Research

The present study had restrictions. First of all, the obtained information was limited only to one group and specifically focused to two sessions of the Target Language IV, thus certainly any assumption cannot be generalized to the entire course, other teachers and students. Lastly, talking about the materials, the use of the video recorder did not enable to get a normal behavior of the participants.

5.3 Directions for Further Research

Meaning Negotiation is a process which is mainly promoted in the task. Therefore, it would be necessary to design specific tasks so that the process can be fostered for sure. Another important point is that this study was totally qualitative, so it documented only some aspects, such as the main characteristics of the process that enabled to understand some specifics that happen in the class and can be analyzed in other courses. However, a quantitative study would be necessary taking into account the conceptions of the teachers about meaning negotiation and hence the tasks they propose in driving the process. Finally, since this study only focused on the existence of three specific types of meaning negotiation in the class, without taking into account if there was a direct relation with the learning process, then, it would be important to document in future research if this process indeed helps learning directly.

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Appendix A Instrument

MEANING NEGOTIATION CHECKLIST				
Date: _____				
Class: _____				
Objective of the class: _____				
Type of interaction	Task Description	Miscommunication	C's Meaning Negotiation	Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher-Student Teacher presents topics and enables students to participate and get involved in the learning process.		<input type="checkbox"/> Misunderstanding It implies different semantic analysis by the speaker and the hearer.	<input type="checkbox"/> Comprehension Check It is any expression designed to establish whether the speaker's preceding utterance was understood by the interlocutor. e.g. <i>Do you understand? Do you follow me?</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Student-Student Students work in pairs or groups while completing a task.		<input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete understanding Those instances in which one or more participants perceive that something has gone wrong.	<input type="checkbox"/> Confirmation Check It is any expression immediately following an utterance by the interlocutor and repeating all or a part of it, designed to check whether the utterance was correctly understood or heard. E.g. <i>Is this what you mean?</i>	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Non-understanding It is a total or partial failure to understand the message.	<input type="checkbox"/> Clarification Request Any expression designed to elicit clarification of the interlocutor's preceding utterance. E.g. <i>what? Huh?</i>	

Appendix B First Draft

Meaning Negotiation Category Chart

Category	Characteristics
Comprehension Check	It is any expression designed to establish whether the speaker's preceding utterance was understood by the interlocutor.
Confirmation Check	It is any expression immediately following an utterance by the interlocutor and repeating all or a part of it, designed to check whether the utterance was correctly understood or heard.
Clarification Request	It is any expression designed to elicit clarification of the interlocutor's preceding utterance.

Long 1996, cited in Van Den Branen, 2000 quoted in Philip et al., 2008.