ISSN: 2993-8759

Iris Journal of Educational Research

DOI: 10.33552/IJER.2025.05.000604

Iris Publishers

Mini Review

Lexical Gains through Negotiation-Based Strategies: Opportunities for EMI Business Schools

Yung-huei Chen*

Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan

***Corresponding author**: Yung-huei Chen, Department of Business Administration, National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan

Received Date: May 06, 2025

Published Date: May 20, 2025

Abstract

As English as a Medium of Instruction has experienced rapid growth in non-English-speaking academic settings in recent years, concerns have arisen regarding learners' language proficiency in comprehending subject matter. To address this need and improve learner involvement, applying negotiation as a communicative mechanism might be a promising idea. Built upon evidence from language acquisition research, the study underscores how negotiation promotes learner engagement, supports lexical development, and strengthens the use of the target language through communicative interaction. Empirical findings suggest that negotiation contributes to both productive and receptive vocabulary acquisition and facilitates intercultural communication. However, critiques of negotiation point to its limitations, including lack of comprehensible input, learners' struggle with learning burden, and delivery imbalance on meaning rather than form. While the pedagogical advantage of negotiation is an unresolved issue, this paper argues that it shows promise for application in EMI-conducted business schools. Since students in business-related disciplines often require more frequent communicative tasks, examining the potential of negotiation as a pedagogical approach to improve learning outcomes may be worthwhile for future investigation.

Keywords: Negotiation; Language Learning; Higher Education; English as a Medium of Instruction; Business School

Introduction

As English as a Medium of Instruction [EMI] has experienced rapid growth in non-English-speaking academic settings in recent year, concerns have arisen regarding learners' language proficiency in comprehending subject matters. To address this need and improve learner involvement, applying negotiation as a communicative mechanism might be a promising idea. When learners enroll in EMI courses, they may employ a range of vocabulary learning strategies to cope with language inputs of their instructors and peers, hoping to retain their lexical knowledge long enough to succeed academically. As they become more familiar with these strategies and aware of their individual learning styles, they are better able to optimize the overall vocabulary acquisition process.

Several studies suggest that obtaining more terminological understanding and sophisticated communication skills is associated with better academic achievement. Therefore, the retention of word knowledge plays a crucial role in back-and-forth discussions within the framework of negotiation, as such interactions pave the way for learners to uncover word meanings through peer interactions [1]. Previous research has demonstrated the significance of negotiation, especially for learners in higher education. The learners have polished their understanding of the texts, improved communication skills, and refined linguistic awareness by using this strategy. When

negotiation of meaning is practiced, learners achieve the best-developed level of comprehensibility on vocabulary [2]. In general, this interactive process promotes the use of target language; as communication is an indispensable component of business education that should not be overlooked or marginalized. This paper aims to examine how negotiation facilities language learning by using examples from other disciplines, and recommend its applicability in business-targeted EMI settings.

Mechanisms of Negotiation

Negotiation involves explaining, summarizing, or providing a solution [3]. It is a meaningful form of communication between and among interlocutors [4,5]. It can also refer to a situation in which a speaker tries to overcome a conversational barrier during which information is altered and messages are modified [6]. Broadly speaking, negotiation aims to solve comprehension difficulties [7]. In this sense, it is a learner-learner interaction [4]. Such communications though social and interpersonal interactions advance the learning process [4,5].

Negotiation is diachronic [8] and productive [5]. When a word is being negotiated and remembered, learners use the target language as a means of explanation or rephrasing during the process [9]. The refinement of linguistic knowledge can be significantly improved and developed [10] because both form and function are practiced during the process [7,9]. In the same vein, neither productive nor receptive vocabulary acquisition can be accomplished without the implementation of negotiated interactions [6]. When linguistic forms are noticed and understood, the negotiation process can be maximized [2].

Experimental Evidence of Negotiation

Researchers have stated that the interactions in negotiations of meaning are beneficial for non-native speakers. They facilitate L2 acquisition [5,6,8,11], stimulate cognitive processing [9], and internalize lexical development [2,9]. Negotiation yields benefit for different age groups, subjects, and communicative interactions. Its practices are hallmarks of learning a second language [4-6], English as a Foreign Language [1,2,7], and the acquisition of new linguistic materials [10].

Due to limited word stock, L2 learners struggle to express their opinions and participate in meaningful communication [8]. From this perspective, instructors are advised to raise questions during the intervention as to craft sufficient learning opportunities [12]. They are suggested to provide learners with meaningful learning activities and oral practices [13] so that they can engage the learners with diverse learning tasks and encourage them to communicate in the target language in the negotiation process [5,13]. Moreover, negotiation is a problem-solving form of communication in which learners make linguistic efforts to reach a mutual understanding [1,4,7]. Learners engage in intercultural communication [10] as the negotiation process is carried out in the target language [2]. The relevant categories together with their associated benefits are embodied in successful communication [10] and open-to-learning conversations [14] in the higher education context.

Critiques and Limitations

Several studies have questioned the pedagogical value of negotiation, claiming its ineffectiveness in producing desirable learning outcomes [12-14]. When learners are involved in the negotiation process, they are not necessarily learning more [15]. Without sufficient vocabulary [1,4,13], cultural exposure [13], and communication skills, learners may experience frustration [4]. As a whole, the communication process is tedious [4], and it may hinder learners' cultural and linguistic identification [12].

Learners who are required to engage in negotiation-based language classrooms may face difficulties, since they are forced to manipulate the language to align with their instructors or peers [5]. In such cases, the negotiation process does not necessarily guarantee comprehensible input; instead, learners encounter challenges in providing feedback or corrections [7]. Insufficient exposure and language proficiency are the key elements hindering a successful negotiation [1]. Most of the time, learners may focus on meaning rather than form during the negotiation process [2,13]. These communication breakdowns can be attributed to two reasons [1]. One reason is that learners are pushed to respond to a question or provide an answer. Another is that non-verbal communication does not pave the way for effective oral production within the negotiation process. As a result, negotiation offers little opportunity for contemplation of form-focused learning and thus learners' academic achievement is compromised.

Conclusion

Language fluency is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone in successful negotiation [5]. When EMI is implemented, learners' English proficiency and their comprehension of disciplinary content can be enhanced [16]. It has not yet been proven that EMI learners possess better language proficiency compared to their counterparts in non-EMI settings, because existing studies highlighted L2, ESL, or EFL learning scenarios. As the trend of EMI has swept in non-English spoken countries these days, it will be interesting to explore if negotiation fosters learning motivation and facilitates communication in business education. To deepen learners' interpretation of business-related vocabulary, having them undergo the negotiation process seems to be an alternative to traditional lectures and note-taking. Since students in business-related disciplines often require more frequent communicative tasks, examining the potential of negotiation as a pedagogical approach to improve learning outcomes may be worthwhile for future investigation.

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

References

1. Lázaro A, Azpilicueta-Martínez R (2015) Investigating negotiation of meaning in EFL children with very low levels of proficiency. International Journal of English Studies 15(1): 1-21.

2. Soleimani H (2013) The function of negotiation in Iranian EFL students' vocabulary acquisition. International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature 2(4): 161-173.

3. Farangis S (2013) The effect of negotiation on second language acquisition. Education Journal 2(6): 236-241.

4. Foster P, Ohta AS (2005) Negotiation for meaning and peer assistance in second language classrooms. Applied Linguistics 26(3): 402-430.

5. Hayes R (2005) Conversation, negotiation, and the word as deed: Linguistic interaction in a dual language program. Linguistics and Education 16: 93-112.

6. Fuente MJ (2002) Negotiation and oral acquisition of L2 vocabulary. Studies in Second Language Acquisition 24: 81-112.

7. Cook J (2015) Negotiation for meaning and feedback among language learners. Journal of Language Teaching and Research 6(2): 250-257.

8. Lee C (2004) Language output, communication strategies and communicative tasks: In the Chinese context. University Press of America, Maryland.

9. Mickan P (2013) Language curriculum design and socialisation. Multilingual Matters, Bristol.

10. Bono M, Melo-Pfeifer S (2010) Language negotiation in multilingual learning environments. International Journal of Bilingualism 15(3): 291-309.

11. Bitchener J (2004) The relationship between the negotiation of meaning and language learning: A longitudinal study. Language Awareness 13(2): 81-95

12. Handsfield LJ, Crumpler TP (2013) Dude, it's not an appropriate word": Negotiating word meaning, language ideologies, and identities in a literature discussion group. Linguistics and Education 24: 112-130.

13. Saeed Rashid Al Hosni S (2014) EFL learners' negotiation of meaning. International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature 3(1): 215-223.

14. Verberg CPM, Tigelaar DEH, Verloop N (2015) Negotiated assessment and teacher learning: An in-depth exploration. Teaching and Teacher Education 49: 138-148.

15. Nation P (2002) Best practice in vocabulary teaching and learning. In JC Richards, WA Renandya (Eds.), Methodology in language reading: An anthology of current practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

16. Li L (2020) Student perceptions of the teaching of principles of management using English-medium instruction. Journal of Education for Business 95(2): 115–120.