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Negotiation Strategies in Short-Term Two-Way Conversation Partnerships: Their Use and Usefulness

Past studies in language teaching have addressed the issue of whether the benefits of formal instruction outweigh those of naturalistic instruction, or vice versa.[1] This study examined 1 aspect of naturalistic instruction closely: the conversation partnership. There were 3 conversation partnerships (English/Mandarin, English/Arabic, and English/Korean); each partner played the role of native speaker (NS) and nonnative speaker (NNS) of 1 language. An underlying idea of this study is that the repercussions of a relationship in which members are equal partners in language learning may extend beyond the relationship and into the community. These pairs were organized by the ESL Center at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS). Transcripts of 10-minute English parts of 6 conversations (2 from each partnership) were examined for uses of certain negotiation strategies, and the participants' opinions regarding the usefulness of these strategies in learning English, Mandarin, Arabic or Korean were sought.

Rationale

One of the guiding premises of this study is that while English is a valuable tool for anyone living in the US, foreign languages are equally valuable for native English speakers to learn. The value of learning a foreign language can be understood both practically and in a more abstract sense.

According to Kinginger (2004), "Foreign language learning in the US is … often an attempt to claim a more complex and more satisfying identity" (p. 222). Rather than dividing members of a community, different languages within one neighborhood can provide community members with language learning resources, the opportunity to explore different identities, and a shared endeavor (language learning). As Kinginger (2004) points out:

Learners have differential access to the social networks providing opportunities for engagement in the interactions so crucial to language develop-

ment. Access to language is shaped not only by learners' own intentions, but also by those of the others with whom they interact—people who may view learners as embodiments of identities shaped by gender, race, and social class. (p. 221)

Access to new or foreign languages, identities, and social networks is an advantage for both NS and learners of English in the US. Language learning never takes place in a vacuum, and a conversation partnership may be one of the most natural and convenient spaces for language learning to occur (and for this advantage to be shared). Moreover, the repercussions of the conversations that happen between conversation partners may influence the local community significantly.

Speakers of other languages who live in the US may be less likely to feel ostracized or stereotyped in their new communities if other community members are interested in learning their native languages. In recent literature, the use of a "participation metaphor (PM)" has come to be preferred over an "acquisition metaphor (AM)" to describe language learning (Sfard, 1998). This shift indicates a growing belief that the goal of language learning is the ability to communicate within a specific community as a participant in that community. The implementation of conversation partnerships within a community could presumably affect and initiate this communication when language learning is viewed as an activity in which participation is crucial.

A recent (1993) study by the European Science Foundation (ESF) confirms the global relevance of studies involving SLA by immigrants (Perdue, 1993a, b). In the introduction to the project, the ESF states:

The study of such asymmetrical discourse, where the non-native learner has to deal with the socially dominant language and its representatives, can be seen as a contribution to the study of inter-ethnic communication (and misunderstandings), and of the links between language, social position and disadvantage. (p. 1)

It may be unrealistic to assume that most NS/NNS discourse is asymmetrical, and the conditions of the present study do not mirror those described by the ESF. However, gleaning the reactions of these participants, and noting their usage of negotiation strategies, provides an idea of the feasibility, popularity, and usefulness of conversation partnerships in at least one context.

Specifically, this project investigated which particular negotiation strategies 6 unique learners perceived to be effective, not only in their L2 development, but also in their self-identification as a "valued partner in communication" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 56). This study ascertained which negotiation strategies were used most frequently by the participants in the English parts of two of their interactions. It also paints a picture of which strategies were perceived by the participants to be useful, and it gives their overall impression of the partnerships.

Research Questions

The research questions that this study examined were:

1. In the English sections of short-term two-way conversation partner-ships, which negotiation strategies are used most frequently (by NS and NNS of English)?
2. In short-term two-way conversation partnerships, which negotiation strategies are perceived to be useful (by NS and NNS)?

Definitions of Terms

Working with NNS-NNS conversational dyads, Pica (1994) defined *nego-tiation* as the "modification and restructuring of interaction that occurs when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility." Swain (2004) adds to this definition the notion of *collaborative dialogue,* or conversation that "mediates joint problem solving and knowledge building" (p. 102). Long (1996) highlights the possible impor-tance of conversation partnerships in a language learner's crucial development during *negotiation for meaning*. Accordingly, for the purposes of this project, *negotiation strategies* were defined as strategies that the interlocutors used to preempt or manage difficulty in comprehension of meaning.

The negotiation strategies in question were:

- Correction (self and other);
- Modified output/input (when a NS uses simple words and structures that she probably would not use with another NS)—this includes For-eigner talk (FT), speech in English by a NS that is grammatically so simplified as to be incorrect;
- Repetition (when a speaker repeats himself exactly or repeats exactly what the other speaker has said, in the turn immediately following);
- Recasts (when a NS rephrases what a NNS has said, using alternate/correct grammar or word choice);
- Humor (when a NS or NNS laughs or makes a joke on any topic);
- Comprehension checks (two types: when a NS confirms verbally that a NNS has understood or vice versa) (Schachter, 1983, 1984, 1986);
- Clarification requests (two types: when a NNS asks a question in order to understand a NS's intended message or vice versa) (Schachter, 1983, 1984, 1986);
- Metalanguage, including spelling (using language about language);
- Bilingual dictionary use;
- Switching to the L1.

The term *useful*, as it appears in research question 2, was defined on two levels. Both are subjective. The first level was that of usefulness in language learning. I wanted to know whether students felt more competent and comfort-able in using their L2 as a result of the conversation sessions, and which nego-tiation strategies helped them to feel so. The second level was that of usefulness

in the participants' self-identification as "valued partners in communication" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 56). To determine a bridge between these two levels of meaning, I also solicited each participant's perception of his usefulness to his partner's language learning (see section 2 of Appendix A: Questionnaire.)

The second aspect of the word *useful* was worth investigating for a number of reasons. According to Norton and Toohey (2001), an overlooked but important aspect of language-learning ability is the learner's opportunity (or lack thereof) "to gain access to social relationships in situations where they are perceived as valued partners in communication" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Gauging this perception (of oneself and one's partner) is an important first step in gauging the effect of conversation partnerships on the larger community. Following this train of thought, I wanted to know which elements of these conversation sessions encouraged a mutual feeling of respect and importance between the participants. Put another way, I wanted to know if and when the participants felt that they were being helpful to each other while being helped by each other—if and when they felt that they had communicated effectively during their conversations, and been heard and understood. Research question 2 began to investigate this second layer of meaning in the word *useful*.

Method: Participants, Materials, Procedure

Participants

Originally, I had hoped that the participants would all be native speakers of English or Spanish, since this would permit me personally to examine data in both languages. Also, this type of dyad seemed to mirror the language makeup of conversation partnerships that I expected would occur most frequently in California, given high immigration rates to the US (especially California) of Spanish speakers (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000). I contacted six Spanish/English conversation partnerships through the ESL Center at Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS). As it turned out, of these six Spanish/English partnerships, three had never met (and had no intention of doing so), and three did not respond to my e-mail. I originally thought that some uniformity in participant background would throw into relief any differences in negotiation-strategy use and opinions about such use. However, to collect the desired amount of data (from three conversation partnerships), participants were solicited from a variety of backgrounds. They were:

Name	Native language(s)	TL (Target language)	Background
F	Mandarin (from Taiwan)	English	Enrolled in the ESL and EAPP (English for Academic and Professional Purposes) courses at MIIS. Had been in the US for 3 months.
F1	English and Spanish (from Puerto Rico)	Arabic	Enrolled in the IPS (International Policy Studies) program at MIIS. Had been in the US for 15 years (from age 13).

Name	Native language(s)	TL (Target language)	Background
F2	Arabic (from Egypt)	English	Enrolled in the EAPP program at MIIS. Had been in the US for 3 months.
M	English (from Indiana, US)	Chinese	A student at the DLI (Defense Language Institute) in Monterey. Has lived in the US all his life (25 years).
M1	English (from Washington, US)	Korean	A student at DLI. Has lived in the US all his life (20 years).
M2	Korean (from South Korea)	English	Enrolled in the ESL program at MIIS. Had been in the US for 3 months.

The partnerships were as follows:

Pair A	F1 and F2	English/Arabic
Pair B	M1 and M2	English/Korean
Pair C	M and F	English/Chinese

All participants were in their 20s and 30s. They had indicated an interest in conversation partnerships through applying to the ESL language-partners program at MIIS (see Appendix B), and they were solicited through a personal e-mail from me. Each partnership met for at least 20 minutes per session (to have at least 10 minutes of conversation in each language) and recorded these 20 minutes of data for two sessions. I was not present at the conversation sessions. They occurred in the fall of 2006.

Materials

The materials used were recording devices (cassette and digital) and cassette tapes. Pair A conducted their conversation sessions at the Samson Center at MIIS, whereas pairs B and C conducted their conversation sessions at Plumes Café in Monterey.

The participants were also asked to fill out a questionnaire (Appendix A) at the end of the two sessions. This questionnaire was administered in each participant's native language. I gave it to the participants in person, where possible (along with a gift certificate to a local coffee shop), and sent it electronically in other cases.

The items in the questionnaire were designed as follows:

Item 1 in section 1 is meant to ascertain the participant's holistic impression of the usefulness of conversational partnerships, by asking whether the participant would participate in such a partnership again. Items 2, 3, 8, 9, and 10 have to do with *language learning* usefulness, while items 4-7 gauge the success of the partnership's contribution to each member's feeling valued. Items 8-9 determine whether the participant *noticed* (Schmidt & Frota, 1986) a difference in her foreign language ability during the conversations, and item 10

determines the participant's perception of what knowledge will be retained as a result of the conversations.

Items 11 and 12 also aim to discover participants' opinions about how they were treated by their partners under different circumstances. Therefore, items 2, 3, 8, 9, and 10 (*N*=5) deal with participants' perceptions of *language learning*, while items 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 12 (*N*=7) deal with participants' perceptions of *being valued members* of a partnership. The latter opinion is more difficult to solicit, which explains the unequal distribution of types of question.

Section 1 of the questionnaire is designed to allow a broad analysis of positive or negative responses to the conversation partnership as well as a graduated analysis within those categories. Section 2 of the questionnaire is designed with the same benefits in mind, although it uses a different format (to attempt to combat respondent fatigue).

Section 2 draws the participants' attention to specific negotiation strategies that they may have used during their conversations. Again, the participants' opinion about the dual usefulness of these strategies is sought, and they are asked to consider the usefulness of the strategies for their partners as well as for themselves. The questionnaire is designed to allow for the fact that although a NS of English might think that fixing his partner's mistake right after it occurs is useful for her learning English, he may not have the same opinion about her immediate correction of his mistakes in Hindi (for example). Moreover, he may see these two incidents as having different effects on their relationship.

Section 3 of the questionnaire allows the respondents to comment on any aspects of their conversation sessions that they think have not been addressed in sections 1 and 2. As has been mentioned, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic, Korean, and Mandarin for the native speakers of those languages.

Procedure

This research was carried out as a criterion-groups design in the naturalistic tradition. There was no treatment administered, there was more than one group studied (and compared), there was no control group, and no pretest. The groups were NS and NNS—a comparison of negotiation strategies and attitudes evident in NS/NNS allowed a study of both sides of the coin of conversation partnerships. Assignment was not random, since each of the participants had already been "assigned" a native language. Also, there was not random selection, since I used participants who had signed up for a preexisting program, and the partnerships I studied had already been formed by any number of different methods (assignment by the ESL Center based on level, gender, interests, etc.). These facets of the proposed experiment all meet the requirements for a criterion-groups design (Nunan & Bailey, 2008). Using van Lier's (1988) framework, this research can be classified as "measuring," that is, noninterventionist and structured. Using Grotjahn's (1987) system, this research falls under the category of "exploratory-interpretive."

To control for the ordering effect, students were asked to begin one of their conversation sessions in English and the other session in the other language. I transcribed the English parts of these conversations. The transcripts were then

examined in an interaction analysis for instances of negotiation strategies (defined above). Instances of each negotiation strategy were coded and counted for each participant's use. The frequency of each negotiation strategy mentioned above was determined for NS, NNS, and overall.

Intrarater agreement was 72%. Agreement was calculated by counting all the instances of coded utterances in the second conversations of pair B and pair C, which comprised roughly 25% of the data. The number of utterances that had been coded identically was divided by the total number of utterances coded (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). This rather low percentage of agreement will be discussed further.

Results of Audio Data and Transcripts: The Use of Negotiation Strategies

Four new negotiation strategies were noted in the transcripts, and the number of usages of each was included in the Negotiation Strategies checklist:

- Clarification requests by the NS;
- Comprehension checks by the NNS;
- Spelling (coded as *metalanguage*, but not included in definition of metalanguage on the questionnaire);
- Foreigner talk (coded as *modified output*, but not included in definition of modified output on the questionnaire).

Silence also emerged as an interesting element in the conversations. It was not always obvious, however, if the silence was being employed as a strategy by the participants—if it seemed to be, then it wasn't always clear which participant was using it. Sometimes a speaker's use of silence seemed to indicate cognitive activity; at other times, however, the silence seemed to indicate the participants' inability to employ an appropriate negotiation strategy. Accordingly, silence was not added to the list of strategies used.

It was quickly apparent that the strategies of physical actions and paralanguage could not be measured effectively from the audio recordings, and so they were not counted. However, questions about these strategies were kept on the questionnaire in anticipation of including them in future studies.

The negotiation strategies that were employed the most often by NS in the course of the six conversational excerpts studied were: Repetition (N=52), humor (N=30), modified output (N=26), and clarification requests (N=23). It is important to note that in the last two cases, much of the usage was limited to 1 particular NS; 23 instances of modified output appeared in the utterances of M1, and F1 produced 21 of the 23 clarification requests.

The negotiation strategies that were employed the most often by NNS in the course of the six conversational excerpts studied were: Repetition (N=78), clarification requests (N=46), and humor (N=39). Again, some participants relied on some strategies more heavily than others; roughly half (N=40) of the uses of repetition appeared in the speech of F, whereas instances of clarification requests and humor were evenly divided among the 3 NNS participants.

(Interestingly, however, F produced all 10 of her uses of humor in just one of the conversations.)

Metalanguage appeared 15 times in NS utterances and 14 times in NNS utterances. The majority of these occurrences began with the NNS introducing a metalinguistic component to the conversation.

Countless interesting utterances to study were in the data collected for this project, but my view was focused on negotiation strategies. Negotiation strategies—especially those that were used the most often, including repetition—occasionally seemed to serve differing, even opposite, functions (as has been mentioned regarding silence). Humor, for example, seemed to bond the partners in some cases and create distance in others (intentionally or not). The latter function may be at work in the following exchange from pair B's first conversation about the meaning of the word *sergeant* (lines 58-67):

M2:	OK. Uh, like, in company? At headquarters, I go to sergeant?
M1:	Huh?
M2:	Ah.
M1:	Oh. No no no. Only military.
M2:	Oh, only for-
M1:	Only military.
M2:	OK OK I got it.
M1:	No. (M1 laughs) In company, you call your boss "boss"=
M2:	OK OK OK.
M1:	=or whatever their name is.

When laughter was met with laughter, this seemed to confirm mutual understanding and respect, even in threatening circumstances. In pair A's first conversation, for example, F1 raises the charged issue of the Palestine-Israel conflict (lines 39-42):

F1:	Yeah, about—I love—I love working on that, you know the conflict. You know. Trying to find a resolution.
F2:	You find any-
F1:	No. (F1 and F2 laugh)

But when laughter is not met with laughter, it seems that such unity is withheld. An example of the latter occurs in pair A's second conversation (lines 92-96):

F1:	… and then, tomorrow I have two classes, and then, the (F1 laughs), I'm showing a movie about Kurdistan.
F2:	Kurdistan.
F1:	Mm hm.
F2:	From where you have get this film?

Until this point in the conversation, F2 has laughed five times and F1 has laughed four times—three of these instances occurred in the same line. Laugh-

ter seems to be something they do together readily. In this case, however, F2 does not join in; instead, she repeats the last word of F1's utterance, and replies with a question.

In addition to these opposing effects, the participants' perceptions of which strategies they were using were occasionally at odds with what the transcripts indicated. It was rare that both members of a partnership checked the column labeled "we didn't do this." The exception was pair A—both members agreed that they used neither metalanguage nor a bilingual dictionary. However, the transcript indicates quite clearly that they did use a dictionary (in line 100 of English/Arabic session 1, F1 states, "Yes, this is a little dictionary, electronic dictionary"). The point is not to chide pair A for forgetting their dictionary use; rather, it is to suggest that the use of negotiation strategies does not need to be conscious to be effective. Furthermore, the data indicate that interlocutors can have different opinions about what happens during a conversation. Surely this finding is borne out in almost everyone's personal experience!

Questionnaire Results:
The Usefulness of Negotiation Strategies

Evidence shows that certain groups have not found conversational partnerships to be useful. Kim McDonough (2004), for example, working with EFL learners in Thailand, concluded that students' opinions of pair and group work on the whole were negative. Although these interactions were NNS-NNS, not NS-NNS, they are a reminder that one cannot assume that any or all aspects of conversational partnerships will be useful to all language learners. However, in the present study, all 6 participants "strongly agreed" with the statement "I would participate in a conversational partnership again," demonstrating that there certainly are grounds for considering these partnerships to be useful. In fact, all 6 participants agreed (to varying degrees) with items 4-7 on section 1 of the questionnaire, which are the items designed to determine whether or not participants felt like valued members of a partnership.

Another factor to consider when analyzing the data is the fact that those who participated in this study had volunteered to do so. It may very well be that, given the circumstances of this program, participants simply stop participating in partnerships in which they feel that they are not respected, or that their L2 is not developing. If this is the case, it stands to reason that conversation partners who agreed to participate in this study would rate their experience favorably.

The items from part 1 of the questionnaire that were designed to measure the conversations' perceived usefulness in language learning were numbers 2, 3, 8, 9, and 10. Before examining this data more closely, it should be mentioned that M2 and F2 entirely omitted the section of the questionnaire that explicitly dealt with the connection between negotiation strategies and their partners' language learning. This omission may be attributable to a lack of clarity in the directions. However, it also indicates an unwillingness to speak for one's partner that none of the NS of English shared. This fact may point to a prerogative that the natives of the host country think they have—the ability to speak for their partner—and that the nonnatives may think they lack. It may also simply

be a reflection of individual differences or differences in the dynamics of these particular partnerships. A quick look at the data for the questions dealing with conversational partnerships and language learning (Part 1) seems to indicate that, on the whole, NS of English found the partnerships more useful for their target language (TL) development than did NNS of English:

X= no answer
2= disagree
3= slightly disagree
4= partly agree
5= agree
6= strongly agree

Question number	NS (M, M1, F1 respectively)	NNS (F, M2, F2)
2. This conversational partnership has been useful to me in learning TL	6, 6, 5	X, 5, 4
3. This conversational partnership has been useful to *my partner* in learning TL	5, 6, 5	5, 5, 4
8. I noticed my errors when I spoke TL	5, 5, 6	X, 3, 4
9. I noticed that my partner used unfamiliar grammar with me when speaking my TL	4, 2, 5	X, 5, 3
10. I think I will remember the new grammar I learned in TL during these two conversations	5, 5, 3	X, 5, 3
11. I think I will remember the new vocabulary words I learned in the TL during these two conversations	5, 5, 4	X, 5, 3

Analysis of the Audio Data and Questionnaires: Connections

Within just a few minutes of data analysis, it became clear that individual differences affected the use and usefulness of negotiation strategies more than any cultural or linguistic influence that could be measured. In contrast to the common practice of attributing discursive difficulties to cultural discrepancies, David Shea (1994) shies away from discourse analysis that attributes cross-cultural misunderstandings to differences in cultural interpretation. Instead, he suggests that

… interpretation is mediated by the character of the social activity in which it is situated, and that the discourse of the NNS is in part constructed by the NS's either amplifying or reducing response to the interlocutor's speech. (p. 358)

The data from this project support Shea's (1994) suggestion. Each individual interlocutor brought a perspective to his or her conversational partnership

that was impossible to predict based on his or her culture alone, and to attribute the misunderstandings that arose to different cultural backgrounds would be to underestimate the power and importance of the immediate, co-constructed social context. Using terms from sociocultural theory, we can say that an approach that examines the data through the microgenetic domain seems more appropriate than one in the sociocultural domain (Lantolf, 2004). As Ricento (2005) puts it, since "individual identity is not a fixed attribute, it is inaccurate to ascribe totalizing group-based identities and behaviors based on language, ethnicity, religion or national origin" (p. 895).

The proficiency level of the participants was a facet of these conversations that played a more important role than I had anticipated, both on an individual level and as a force in the partnership. F1, for example, was a near-native speaker of Arabic. In fact, she had crossed out the word *learning* in question 2 of the questionnaire ("This conversational partnership has been useful to me in learning Arabic") and replaced it with the word *practicing*.

The other NS of English, M, was somewhere between M1 and F1 in his Mandarin proficiency, and he was probably the most evenly matched (in terms of proficiency) with his partner. This allowed them (pair C) to employ strategies that might not have been available to the other pairs, who had a broader chasm between their language proficiencies. For example, M1 said that he did not notice unfamiliar grammar in his partner's Korean (question 9). This may be because M1 was a beginning student of Korean.

In a study of correction in NS-NNS English conversation among adult speakers, Gaskill (1980) found only 17 examples of other-correction in 30 minutes (50 pages) of transcribed conversations. These examples were offered by NS to NNS, and they were modulated, meaning that the correctors expressed doubt about their correcting. Other-correction occurred only once in this investigation, and it was solicited. Although it took place in an English section of a conversation between M1 and M2, it occurred when M1 switched briefly to Korean to try to say a word in Korean that he had just used in English. Although this was the only instance that I noted of correction, only one pair (pair A) checked "we didn't do this" as a response to the question of how effective this strategy had been in their language learning. Although F1 said she did not correct her partner's mistakes, she indicated that when her partner corrected her mistakes in Arabic, this was "very effective" in her language learning and had a "very positive" effect on their relationship. Among those who answered this question, the other partners rated this strategy as effective, very effective, or having no effect on their (or their partners') language learning. They also gave this strategy positive marks for its effect on their relationships. This implies correction enjoys a solid but untested reputation as a language-learning strategy.

In part 3 of the questionnaire, participants were asked, "Are you aware of other strategies that you and your partner used to communicate? If so, can you describe them?" Four participants (2 NS, 2 NNS) responded to this question, and it was interesting to see what they classified as *strategies*. Responses fell into the following categories: organizing conversation by topic, offering practical help, or absence of strategizing. M2 seemed not to see a need for directing the

conversations, explaining that "because I wanted to develop speaking proficiency, my partner and I have had only free conversation without any specific strategies" (translated from the Korean). However, F2 (also a NNS) indicated that she found it helpful linguistically and pragmatically to structure conversations: "Yes, we talk together about the study and programs. I think that sometimes I learn things to do it when I study from my partner." F2's partner (F1) did not mention this as a strategy.

M2's partner (M1) seemed to concur with M2, describing their strategy as "talking about differences in culture and societies. Ex. military, girls, alcohol etc."—probably an accurate description of what M1 calls "free conversation." (M1 wistfully indicates another possible strategy when he adds, "This is a really fun program. My roommate and friends also use this but they end up dating their language partners and that seems to really help them out.")

The most conscious use of a strategy came from M of pair C, who explained that "we select a topic beforehand so we can prepare and look up vocabulary. Sometimes we use roleplays … ." M's partner does not mention this as a strategy, but the transcript of their conversations bears out M's statement.

Clearly, strategy use is dictated by individual preferences and differences that are combined in unique partnerships. This is perhaps most obvious from the high frequency with which some participants used certain strategies. These preferences may be a result of differences in many areas—culture, gender, age, or proficiency, to name a few. Certain proficiency levels across the board may find different strategies helpful, or the difference in proficiency within a partnership may lead to a preference of some strategies over others. M1's use of FT is a striking example of a preference for a certain strategy, as we can see from the beginning of the first conversation (lines 67-73):

M1:   She is DLI student.
M2:   Ah, really?
M1:   And she is Chinese.
M2:   Ah.
M1:   So already speaks it so easy for her—
M2:   Oh. (2) She is teacher?
M1:   No, she is student.

M1 rated this strategy as "effective" for his partner's language learning. He also rated it as "very effective" for his own language learning when his partner spoke in "simpler Korean." In both cases, he thought the strategy had no effect on their relationship.

The overall impression of these conversations is that the participants are deeply invested in their success. Their uses of strategies, especially repetition, humor, and clarification requests, reflect a genuine interest in carrying on a meaningful conversation. As F1 put it, "By engaging in active listening of the other person, it is more likely you will fully understand the content, even if mistakes are made." If the emphasis is on understanding, I can optimistically conclude that almost any negotiation strategy may work and be perceived as effective by both partners.

Limitations of the Study

The fact that F answered only the question regarding the usefulness of the partnership for her partner hints to me that the translation of the questionnaire did not succeed. Where the original questionnaire said *Chinese*, it may not have been changed into *English* by the translator (an understandable mistake, given that I had mentioned it only once, and it occurs many times). Also, because of lack of time, the questionnaires were not back translated. The fact that I was unable to confirm that the questionnaires asked exactly what I wanted them to ask may have had a significant (and unfavorable) effect on the data. A lack of clarity in the directions, even in English, may be responsible for some participants' omission of certain questions.

Even when no translations were necessary, it was sometimes difficult to define particular negotiation strategies. Not only did different individuals have different ideas about what had transpired during a conversation—the researcher herself was inconsistent in determining which strategies were used, and when. This is probably attributable to the fact that I fine-tuned my definitions of negotiation strategies as I went through more material. In the future, the intrarater agreement of 72% could be raised by clearer, exemplified definitions of the strategies—something that will be possible only with continued analysis of negotiation strategies.

Implications for Future Research

From the results of this study, further research may have a starting point from which to address this topic among different language-learner populations and in different settings. In the future, it might be valuable to examine data from more conversation partnerships in a criterion groups–design study, in which the groups that are compared are not NS/NNS. Instead, they could be members of different cultural backgrounds, genders, or proficiencies. Future research might also compare different conversation partnerships within the same language pairings. Additionally, future work can investigate the implementation of negotiation strategies in the L2 classroom as well as in naturalistic (Pica, 1983) settings.

Further investigations in this area should be videotaped as well as audiotaped in order to expand the list of possible negotiation strategies and to define them more succinctly. Access to the physical and paralinguistic features of a conversation may help to clarify nuanced differences and to classify the different uses of silence in conversation. Additionally, all questionnaires should be translated and back translated.

If the specific advantages of conversational partnerships can be established, and if the use of conversational partnerships is to be endorsed as a result, then the possibilities for positive (or negative) cultural cross-communication may be considerable. Conversational partnerships could be especially meaningful in second language learning for students who may not be able to afford formal instruction, such as some immigrants to the US.

Author

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Note

[1]Based on Pica's (1983) work, I define *formal instruction* as instruction that takes place in a classroom with guidance (human or computer) and *naturalistic instruction* as instruction that takes place outside a classroom, guided by the student and her surrounding conditions. For more on this discussion, see especially Doughty (1991), Gass and Varonis (1994), and Pica (1983).

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Questionnaire
*(translated into Mandarin, Korean, and Arabic, with the substitution of those
language names where "English" now occurs, and vice versa. In other English
versions, "Korean" appeared as "Mandarin" or "Arabic.")*

Describing your experience as a conversation partner

Thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions about your
participation in an English/Korean conversational partnership. This survey is
being conducted to better understand the role of two-way language partner-
ships in language learning. **There are no right answers**.

   Feel free to add to any of your responses to the prompts!

   Your responses are completely confidential, and your help and honesty are
greatly appreciated.

Preliminary information:
What is your native language?

Where are you from?

How long have you been in the U.S.?

When did you first meet your conversation partner (how long ago)?

How often did you see your conversation partner outside of these two sessions,
if at all?

Section 1. In this section, please respond to each statement by circling or **put-
ting in bold** the appropriate word or words. Note that you have six (6) options
for each statement.

For example:
Monterey is a beautiful place to live.
Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree **Strongly agree**

   1.   I would participate in a conversational partnership again.
Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

   2.   This conversational partnership has been useful to me in learning Ko-
         rean.
Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

   3.   This conversational partnership has been useful to **my partner** in
         learning English.
Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

4. When I was speaking English, I felt that my partner listened closely and tried to understand me.

Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

5. When I was speaking Korean, I felt that my partner listened closely and tried to understand me.

Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

6. I listened closely and tried hard to understand when my partner spoke Korean.

Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

7. I listened closely and tried hard to understand when my partner spoke English.

Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

8. I noticed my errors when I spoke Korean with my partner (**without** my partner's drawing attention to them).

Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

9. I noticed that my partner used unfamiliar grammar with me when speaking Korean.

Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

10. I think that I will remember the new grammar that I learned in Korean during these two conversations with my partner.

Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

11. I think that I will remember the new vocabulary words that I learned in Korean during these two conversations with my partner.

Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

12. No matter what language we were speaking, **my partner treated me** the same way.

Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

If you disagree, please try to explain the different treatment:

13. No matter what language we were speaking, **I treated my partner** the same way.

Strongly disagree Disagree Slightly disagree Partly agree Agree Strongly agree

If you disagree, please try to explain the different treatment:

Section 2. For each strategy that you used, please rate it on **two** scales of 1 to 5 for its *effectiveness in language learning* AND *its positive or negative effect on your relationship with your partner*. An example is given below.

The 1 to 5 scale for rating *effect on language learning/effect on relationship* consists of the following descriptions:

1- Detrimental to language learning/very negative effect on our relationship
2- Not helpful for language learning/slightly negative effect on our relationship
3- No effect on language learning/no effect on our relationship
4- Effective in language learning/slightly positive effect on our relationship
5- Very effective in language learning/extremely positive effect on our relationship

For example:

Strategy	Effect on MY PARTNER'S language learning	Effect on our relationship	We didn't do this
Listening closely to my partner	4	5	

If you didn't use a strategy, check the column titled, ***We didn't do this***.

Notice that the first half of this section is about **your partner's** language learning, while the second half is about **your** language learning.

1- Detrimental to language learning/very negative effect on our relationship
2- Not helpful for language learning/slightly negative effect on our relationship
3- No effect on language learning/no effect on our relationship
4- Effective in language learning/slightly positive effect on our relationship
5- Very effective in language learning/extremely positive effect on our relationship

Strategy	Effect on MY PARTNER'S language learning	Effect on our relationship	We didn't do this
Fixing my partner's mistake in English right after it occurred			
Speaking in simpler English for my partner			

Repeating what I said in English			
When my partner said something incorrectly in English, and I repeated it correctly			
Humor (joking, laughter)			
When I checked (in any language) to be sure my partner understood me			
When my partner checked (in any language) to be sure I understood him/her			
When my partner asked me a question (in any language) to be sure s/he understood me			
When I asked my partner a question (in any language) to be sure I understood him/her			
My use of intonation, stress, or volume in speech			
My speaking slowly			
My using physical gestures			
My using metalanguage (talking about language, for example, "a transitive verb always takes an object")			
My partner's bilingual dictionary use			
My switching to Korean			

1- Detrimental to language learning/very negative effect on our relationship
2- Not helpful for language learning/slightly negative effect on our relationship
3- No effect on language learning/no effect on our relationship
4- Effective in language learning/slightly positive effect on our relationship
5- Very effective in language learning/extremely positive effect on our relationship

Strategy	Effect on MY language learning	Effect on our relationship	We didn't do this
My partner's fixing my mistake in Korean right after it occurred			
My partner's speaking in simpler Korean			
When my partner repeated what s/he said in Korean			
When I said something incorrectly in Korean, and my partner repeated it correctly			
Humor (joking, laughter)			
When I checked (in any language) to be sure my partner understood me			
When my partner checked (in any language) to be sure I understood him/her			
When my partner asked me a question (in any language) to be sure s/he understood me			
When I asked my partner a question (in any language) to be sure I understood him/her			
My partner's use of intonation, stress, or volume in speech			
My partner's speaking slowly			
My partner's using physical gestures			
My partner's using metalanguage (talking about language, for example, "a transitive verb always takes an object")			
My bilingual dictionary use			
My partner's switching to English			

Are you aware of other strategies that you and your partner used to communicate? If so, can you describe them?

Section 3. Are there any other elements of your conversation partnership that you would like to comment on? (For example, any very positive or negative interactions, any communication breakdowns, overall impression …) THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

Monterey Institute of International Studies
Intensive ESL
Conversation Partner
Program

Having a Conversation Partner while you are learning a second language is a great way to improve your skills and get a direct line to the people whose language and culture you are studying. Conversation Partners meet *informally* and *on their own terms* to socialize and to practice the language they are learning. To help you make contact with someone whose availability and interests are compatible with yours, please fill out this brief questionnaire.

Name:	**Native language(s):**
Address:	**Language(s) you want a partner for:**
E-mail:	**Level in second language:**
Phone:	**MIIS Program:** IESL IEP T&I MBA IPS MPA SILP
Sex:	**Age (optional):**

I prefer a Conversation Partner who is: (check one for age and one for sex)
___ close to my age   ___ same sex
___ any age   ___ either sex

I am available to meet: (check one for hours and one for days)
___ 1-2 hours/week   ___ weekday afternoons
___ 2-3 hours/week   ___ weekends only
___ 3+ hours/week   ___ either weekdays or weekends

My interests include: (check all that apply)
___ going for walks   ___ going to movies   ___ cooking
___ hiking   ___ going to the beach   ___ biking
___ visiting coffeehouses ___ shopping   ___ visiting tourist sights
___ sports (which ones?) ___ going dancing   ___ going out to eat

Others? (please list:)

Please add any additional information which will help us match you on the back of this sheet.

Conversation Partners Guidelines

The conversation partner program is a service we provide to help our students facilitate their learning of English. It is our hope that our students feel comfortable while engaging in a fun, relaxed, and safe learning environment. As the Conversation Program aims to benefit both parties in their language learning goals, it is also our hope that you too will benefit from meeting with your conversation partner.

Following is a useful list of guidelines to consider when meeting with your language partner. We ask that you read this list **before** meeting with your conversation partner so as to ensure your understanding of the Conversation Partner Program and issues concerning the well being of our students.

1. For your first meeting, contact your partner by e-mail and/or phone to arrange a time and location to meet. During your first meeting, set a plan with your language partner so that there is **an equal and fair exchange of languages** during meeting times.

2. Keep in mind that your language partner is not obligated to meet with you. This is not a contracted partnership program, but a **voluntary** program only.

3. Do not ask your conversation partner to meet you in a private place, such as your house or apartment. Please make arrangements to meet in **public venues**, such as a café, the farmer's market, the Monterey Institute's student center, or local restaurants.

4. Keep in mind that some of our students are new to the United States. Please be sensitive and aware to **cultural differences** that you may encounter.

Thanks for your interest in the Conversation Partner Program!

Bob Cole, Program Head
Intensive ESL at the Monterey Institute of International Studies