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Familiarity with task and its effect on the way children negotiate for meaning, and provide and use implicit negative feedback

Alec P. Kanganas
Edith Cowan University

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**Familiarity with task and its effect on the way children negotiate for
meaning, and provide and use implicit negative feedback.**

By

Alec Peter Kanganas

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements For the Award of Master of Education
At the Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University, Mount Lawley.**

December, 2002

**Student Number
2280268**

ABSTRACT

This research involves an examination of the effects that familiarity with a task may have on the way young ESL children negotiate for meaning, and provide and use implicit negative feedback to each other.

The focus of this research is the interactions that occur between pairs of young primary school children between the ages of 7.0 to 8.6 years. Two studies were carried out. The first study investigated the effect of familiarity with a type of task, whilst the second examined the effects of familiarity with the content (or subject domain).

A stratified random sampling procedure was used to select 40 ESL children (20 girls and 20 boys) from a primary school in Perth, Western Australia. Strategies of negotiation (as outlined by Long, 1983), and patterns of interaction (as outlined by Oliver, 1995b, 2000) were used to analyse the interactions between the children after having worked through two different types of tasks, a one way task and a two way task for each study. Half the tasks were made familiar (i.e., either type or content) to the children, while the other half were kept unfamiliar.

Results from the studies suggest that familiarity has a significant effect on the way children negotiate for meaning, and their provision and use of implicit negative feedback. The frequency of negotiation and the provision of implicit negative feedback increases when working on unfamiliar tasks. However, only the familiar dyads were able to use a substantial proportion of this feedback when it was provided to them.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institute of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Alec Peter Kanganas

December, 2002.

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I would like to thank Dr Rhonda Oliver, my supervisor, who has inspired confidence and patiently assisted me in all aspects of this work. Also to my family who have always believed in my ability to achieve whatever I can.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Most ESL teachers, including junior primary teachers, acknowledge the importance of interaction in the process of acquiring a second language. This is reflected in the amount of time devoted in designing and using activities which promote interaction in young children. Junior primary ESL teachers have long acknowledged the importance of making input comprehensible, and have designed programs around themes and topics based on a language experience and communicative approach to learning. Promoting familiarity with general classroom approaches to learning, and designing appropriate language tasks have been the primary work of ESL teachers. At the same time, however, new ways of thinking about what we are currently doing in the classroom is not being addressed by primary school teachers because of the dearth of SLA research on child L2 learners.

A proponent of the importance of making input comprehensible through interaction is Long [1983]. Further, he outlines the importance of interactional modifications (such as: clarification requests, and confirmation and comprehension checks) which occur when meaning is being negotiated. Pica [1994] points out that negotiation is important as it can bring about conditions that are regarded as being helpful for learners acquiring a second language. These conditions include: opportunities for learners to work collaboratively towards mutual comprehension, as well as gaining access to what Swain (1985) describes as 'pushed output'. These allow learners to advance to higher levels of grammatical proficiency, and to receive useful feedback about their attempts in the target language.

Another important role that negotiation plays is that it can highlight differences between a learner's interlanguage and the target language. It has been suggested that negotiations "can serve to focus learners' attention on potentially troublesome parts of their discourse, providing them with information that can then open the door to interlanguage modifications" [Gass, Mackey, and Pica, 1998; p. 301]. This information can also be provided through the use of recasts, another form of implicit negative feedback. These forms of feedback can alert learners to "switch their attentional focus from message to form, identify the problem, and notice the needed input" [Long, 1996, p. 425]. It is for this reason that the linguistic modifications that are evident through interaction can "facilitate acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways" [Long, 1996, p. 451 - 452].

Studies in negotiated interactions have demonstrated that certain factors facilitate negotiation moves more so than others. For instance, Pica, Kanagy and Falodun, [1993] suggest that task type can affect the quantity of negotiation for meaning, and as a consequence, the potential for promoting language acquisition. Although much work needs to be done to establish how specific task characteristics affect the way children negotiate, there is evidence to suggest that tasks which require information exchange and have a limited number of possible outcomes are more conducive to negotiation than tasks which do not have these characteristics. Therefore, it follows that language educators need to give more attention to the properties of tasks that respectively aim to promote second language acquisition. One of these, familiarity with particular aspects of a task,

has been studied to some degree with adult learners [Plough and Gass 1993; Robinson, 2001], and results show some significant effects with regard to the extent to which learners negotiate. However, because familiarity has not been specifically isolated and examined in respect of young children, it is not known whether they would react in the same way.

Therefore this research investigates if and how familiarity of a task affects the way young children negotiate for meaning, and provide and use implicit negative feedback. Two distinct studies were carried out. The first study focussed on familiarity with the procedural aspects of a task, while the second focussed on familiarity with the subject matter. The setting for each study was the classroom (thus, extending research conducted by Foster [1998] in which she examined the utility of negotiation in a classroom rather than in a laboratory setting). This research also continues on the work by Oliver [1995a, 1995b, 1998, 1999, 2002], who has investigated the patterns of negotiation for meaning and the provision of negative feedback in child interactions. The data from this research may be used to inform practitioners about how to effectively prepare or implement tasks that maximise potential for second language acquisition in children.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Since second language acquisition theory and research first revealed that interactions are important for language acquisition [Long, 1980, 1981, 1983; Hatch, 1983; Gass & Varonis, 1985], there has been a growing body of research on the nature of these interactions, especially between adult NSs-NNSs and NNSs-NNSs.

In order for learners to interact meaningfully they must have some form of need and desire to communicate. Ellis [1990] points out that this comes from their involvement and interest in what is being talked about. Further, it is claimed that learners must also make an effort to be understood, and one way this can be achieved is through the negotiation of meaning [Long, 1983; Pica, Young and Doughty, 1987; Ellis, 1990, 1994].

Most of the research on the negotiation of meaning has centred on adult ESL learners. However, Oliver [1998, 1999, 2002] has investigated conversational interaction involving child second language learners, and Ellis and Heimbach [1997] have investigated the effects of negotiation on children's acquisition of word meanings. Results from SLA research have shown that there are differences between the way adults and children attain a second language [Scarcella and Higa, 1981; Harley, 1986; Singleton, 1989]. However, "The results of adult negotiation studies have been used with little modifications as the basis for teaching methodologies in child SLA" [Oliver, 1998, p.373]. From a

pedagogical perspective it is important to consider whether this practice is appropriate for primary school children learning a second language.

One way in which language practitioners can provide opportunities for learners to negotiate for meaning is through the use of tasks [Gass and Varonis, 1985; Long, 1989; Pica, Kanagy and Falodun, 1993; Robinson 2001]. Tasks, it is argued, can generate productive forms of communication breakdowns, during which learners can then modify their utterances to make them more comprehensible [Long, 1989]. Therefore, a research priority, which has risen from this perspective, has been to establish which task types and conditions (e.g., familiarity with a task) generate effective opportunities for learners to negotiate for meaning [Doughty and Pica, 1986; Pica, Kanagy and Falodun, 1993; Plough and Gass, 1993].

This literature review is divided into seven sections to cover some of the important issues addressing how second language learners negotiate for meaning, and what effect familiarity with a particular task or with the content of a task may have on this. The sections include [1] Negotiation For Meaning, [2] Input, [3] Output, [4] Feedback, [5] Feedback For Child Second Language Learners, [6] Tasks, and [7] Familiarity.

2.1 Negotiation of Meaning

2.1.1 Interaction

Hatch [1969], Long, [1980, 1981, 1983,]; Ellis [1990], and Chaudron [1988] claim that language acquisition is a process which relies on conversational interaction. In fact Hatch [1969] points out that it is through interacting with others that learning opportunities are created. For example, Hatch [1969, p. 404] states that "as one learns how to do conversation, one learns to interact verbally, and out of this opportunity syntactic structures are developed". This is supported by Chaudron [1988] who points out that interaction gives learners the opportunities to experiment and incorporate target language structures into their own speech.

As early as 1981 Rivers pointed out that there was a growing trend for many teachers to devote more time to communicative interaction in the classroom, which reflected the growing importance placed on the development of oral communication skills. Canale and Swain [1980] define these skills as comprehending input, grammatical accuracy, sociolinguistic appropriateness and strategic competence. Although Krashen's [1981] input hypothesis minimizes the role of interacting for acquiring a second language, many ESL researchers [e.g., Long, 1981; Gass and Varonis, 1985; Pica, 1993, 1994; Yule, 1997; Oliver, 1998] state that in order to promote communicative competence, learners must get practice speaking in communicative exchanges in the classroom. In achieving this Canale and Swain [1980, p. 53] suggest that classroom activities should be characterized by "aspects of genuine communication such as its basis in social

interaction, the relative creativity and unpredictability of utterances, its purposefulness and goal orientation, and its authenticity.”

Interaction also provides opportunities for learners to take control of their own learning, which is now acknowledged as an important factor in language acquisition [Rivers, 1983; Van Lier, 1996]. Rivers asserts that to develop autonomous control of language, students need to rely on their own resources and use their ingenuity. In this way, early in their language learning, they come to realise that only by interacting freely and independently with others can they learn the control and ready retrieval essential for fluent language use. To this end, Rivers [1983, p. 66] points out that opportunity must be given for students “to use what they have been building up. Thus, linguistic knowledge can be tested out immediately in natural communicative use.” Students will then come to know what they can do, and what aspects they need to focus on to develop further.

Johnson [1995] also points out that the nature of the language that is generated as a result of interaction can have cognitive benefits for students. When students work collaboratively in pairs or groups they are more likely to engage in exploratory talk, and use language to learn as opposed to merely demonstrating what has been learned. In addition, exploratory talk fosters more informal language use and student centered styles and strategies of learning that may be inhibited during teacher directed instruction.

2.1.2 Negotiation

A particular type of interaction, namely 'negotiation for meaning', has been the focus of a considerable amount of research. The term has been used to characterise the restructuring of interaction that takes place when speakers anticipate, perceive, or experience a misunderstanding [Pica, 1994]. As learners negotiate, they "work linguistically to achieve the needed comprehensibility, whether repeating a message verbatim, adjusting its syntax, changing its words, or modifying its form" [Pica, 1994, p. 494]. Several experimental studies confirm that when non native speakers signal nonunderstandings, native and non native speakers modify their messages to render them more comprehensible, which has been hypothesized to assist interlanguage development [Gass and Varonis, 1985; Doughty and Pica, 1986; Duff, 1986; Pica, Young and Doughty, 1987; Pica, 1993].

Gass and Varonis [1994] point out that negotiation for meaning is the most important distinguishing feature between interactive and non interactive input. Conversational adjustments that occur when learners negotiate are not only regarded as an important source of information about the target language for the participants [Long, 1996; Mackey, 1999; Ellis and He, 1999], but certain studies have also found it beneficial for the listeners [Pica, 1992; Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki, 1994].

However, in contrast, Stevick [1976, 1980, 1981], among others [Varonis and Gass, 1985; Pica, Kanagy and Falodun, 1993] claims that for there to be successful communication, there must be active involvement in the discourse. "Active involvement

is a necessary aspect of acquisition since it is through involvement that the input becomes charged and penetrates deeply" [Gass and Varonis, 1985, p. 150]. Active involvement occurs when learners co-operatively work together as they negotiate towards understanding each other's messages to keep a conversation going [Pica, Holliday, Lewis and Morgenthaler, 1989; Pica, 1987, Varonis and Gass, 1985; Scarcella and Higa, 1981]. Thus, it is the co-operative nature of the interaction that often results in mutual understandings between participants as it allows greater sensitivity towards learners moment to moment needs in understanding the messages that are being exchanged [Loschky, 1989, 1994].

Long [1983] gave the first detailed list of strategies used by learners and their interlocutors when they negotiate for meaning. These include conversational frames, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, clarification requests, self repetitions, other repetitions and expansions. In comparing conversations between native speakers with conversations between native and non native speakers, Long [1983] found significantly more of six of the seven strategies in the NS-NNS conversations, conversational frames being the only feature which did not differ significantly across the two conditions. Doughty and Pica [1986], Long and Sato [1983], Loschky [1989] and Oliver [1998] amongst others have used a subset of Long's [1983] strategies to investigate conversational interactions between interlocutors.

Gass and Varonis [1985] present a different model to describe the way interlocutors negotiate for meaning. They refer to negotiation exchanges as 'non understanding

routines', which are defined as "those exchanges in which there is some overt indication that understanding between participants has not been complete" [Gass and Varonis, 1985, p. 151]. Such routines are defined as side sequences (or breaks) from the main flow of a conversation [Jefferson, 1972]. The model consists of a trigger (which is the problematic utterance), an indicator (these are the signals of non understanding that halt the normal progression of the conversation and begins the side sequence in which meaning is negotiated), a response to the indicator (e.g., utterances repairing the nonunderstanding in some way), and finally a reaction to the response, which is optional. Indicators can be of two types: direct, which is an explicit statement of nonunderstanding, and indirect, which is a more gentle way of indicating that understanding has not been achieved, such as the echoing of a word or phrase. The 'indicator – response – reaction to the response' portion of the model is called a vertical pushdown, because it has the effect of pushing the conversation down rather than allowing it to proceed in a forward manner [Varonis and Gass, 1985].

Researchers have used alternative labels to describe the sequence of negotiation as outlined by Gass and Varonis [1985]. For example, triggers have been referred to as the 'trouble source' [Deen and Van Hout, 1991] and 'signals' [Pica, 1991], indicators as 'utterance repair' [Long, 1985a; Pica, 1991] and 'repair initiation' [Schegloff, 2000]. Whatever labels are used, it has been noted that the model provided by Gass and Varonis typically portrays the negotiation process [Aston, 1986; Pica, 1994], and "is applicable to a wide range of data" [Varonis and Gass, 1985, p. 152].

A number of researchers have investigated differences between NNS-NNS, NS-NNS, and NS-NS interactions [e.g., Pica and Doughty, 1985; Gass and Varonis, 1985; Varonis and Gass, 1985; and Oliver, 1998, 2002]. They found that NS-NS conversations contain the least number of non-understanding routines, NNS-NNS contain the most, and NS-NNS conversations a number intermediate between the other two types. According to Varonis and Gass [1985, p. 86] the need for negotiation between NNS-NNS pairs is “probably due to the lack of shared background between non-native speakers. This is true even for non-native speakers of the same ethnic background, because the medium of communication – English – is foreign to both.” In addition NNS-NNS dyads who were closest in proficiency level negotiated less than those dyads who were of different levels [Varonis and Gass, 1985].

Gender differences have also been observed in negotiated interactions in a number of studies [Pica, Holliday, Lewis, Berducci and Newman, 1991; Gass and Varonis, 1985, 1986]. Results show that gender plays some part in the way NNS adults negotiate for meaning. For example, Gass and Varonis [1986] found a greater amount of negotiation between NNS-NNS mixed gender dyads than between same gender dyads. Further, in mixed gender dyads women were found to initiate more meaning negotiations than men, however men played a more dominant role in the overall conversation. In another study (which was designed to control for ethnic as opposed to sex differences), Gass and Varonis [1985] found NNS men used more direct indicators to signal unaccepted input than women. In this study NNS women were also found to be less confident about indicating a lack of understanding. However, when investigating child learners, Oliver

[1999, 2002] found no significant differences in the number of negotiated routines between male and female NNN-NNS and NS -NNS dyads. Overall results therefore suggest that gender may have more of an effect in the way adults negotiate than in the way children negotiate for meaning, even though the results with adult learners vary according to the nature of the task [Pica et al, 1991, Pica, Holliday, Lewis and Morgenthaler, 1989].

The claim that negotiation of meaning fosters acquisition has been debated by second language researchers [Foster, 1998; Lyster, 1998]. Although the process of negotiation has been acknowledged as a means through which language items may be noticed [Long, 1996], it has also been suggested that it is not sufficient (or the only factor) to trigger acquisition, as additional work may be necessary to effect a real change in grammar [Loschky, 1994]. However, Plough and Gass [1993, p 53] point out that there is evidence that negotiated interaction can at least be referred to as a beginning point or as "a catalyst for what may eventually result in grammar restructuring." Recent support for this is provided by Mackey [1999] who found a link between interaction and grammatical development. Other studies in support for the interaction hypothesis point to its effect on lexical acquisition [Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki, 1994; Ellis and He, 1999], and on its short term effects on pushed output [Swain, 1995].

Despite the abundant research in the area, there is still little empirical evidence to demonstrate that negotiation is necessary to promote acquisition [Ellis, 2000]. The reason for this is that most of the research has not focussed on the direct impact negotiation can

have in restructuring interlanguage, because of the difficulty in designing studies and investigating the link between the two [Pica, 1994]. However, most negotiation research has been undertaken on the premise that it provides conditions considered theoretically important in language learning [Pica, 1994; Oliver, 1998; Mackey, 1999; Long, 1996], namely the opportunity to receive comprehensible input, production of modified output, and the chance for learners to receive feedback about their attempts. Each of these will be examined in turn.

2.2 Input

The input hypothesis, a fundamental principle of Krashen's [1981, 1982, 1985] Monitor Model, holds that if input is made comprehensible to the learner, either through the content within which it is used, or as a result of simplified input [foreign talk], acquisition will follow. Acquisition occurs when learners understand input that contains structures that are just beyond their current level of competence [known as the $i+1$ hypothesis]. This hypothesis parallels Vygotsky's [1962] zone of proximal development. That is, to provide comprehensible input, teachers must be attuned to the students current level and adjust the complexity of their language accordingly. By doing so, "Teachers can create opportunities for students to participate in lessons meaningfully before they have acquired the necessary skills to do so on their own" [Johnson, 1995, p.82].

Krashen [1981] credits second language classrooms as having the potential to provide a rich source of comprehensible input. He describes optimal input as being first and foremost comprehensible input, that is, focussed on meaning, not form.

There are many published critiques of Krashen's Input Hypothesis [Faerch and Kasper, 1986; Gregg, 1984; McLaughlin, 1987; White, 1987]. Most centre on the criticism that this theory is more interpretative than empirically grounded, and represents only a partial description of the process involved in second language acquisition. For example, Ellis [1990] claims that Krashen [1981] offers no direct evidence in support of the Input Hypothesis. Also Swain [1985]; Long [1996]; and Skehan [1998] report evidence that learners can exhibit premature stabilization (or fossilization) of language acquisition if no opportunity exists for production of the language.

Another prominent theory, the Interaction Hypothesis proposed by Long [1981, 1983, 1985a], emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input through the joint endeavours of participants as they negotiate for meaning. In its new version the theory has been extended to take into account other ways in which meaning negotiation can contribute to second language acquisition, namely through the feedback that learners receive on their own output that arises when learners are pushed to reformulate their production to make them comprehensible [Long 1996].

Pica [1996] points out that negotiated interaction serves as the means by which learners' 'data needs' can be effectively met, and can "set the scene for potential learning" [Gass, Mackey and Pica, 1998, p. 305]. Studies conducted by Pica, Young and Doughty [1987], Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki [1994], and Ellis and He [1999] conclude that adult learners who were given the opportunity to negotiate with their partners comprehended more than

learners who simply received pre-modified (or scripted) input, and that the input from negotiation was more accessible and useful because it was uniquely modified according to the learners own needs and circumstances [Pica, 1991; Varonis and Gass, 1985; Yule and MacDonald, 1990]. Thus, negotiation provides optimal input because it is the result of learners taking an active role in manipulating the input [Ellis et al, 1994; Pica et al, 1987; Gass and Varonis, 1985, 1986; Scarcella and Higa 1981].

It has frequently been claimed that attention to input is necessary for input to become intake [Schmidt, 1995; Tomlin and Villa, 1994; Van Lier, 1991]. Attention is employed by the learner in one of two ways. "It is employed to aid in the comprehension of the meaning of an utterance – attention to meaning; or it is employed to aid in the psycholinguistic processing of the components of an utterance – attention to form" [Tomlin and Villa, 1994, p. 186]. Van Pattern [1990] provides evidence to suggest that learners (especially early stage learners) have a limited capacity to consciously attend to both form and meaning at the same time, because there is a limit to the amount the human mind can handle at a given time. However, Long [1996] points out that when learners negotiate for meaning, they are more likely to be able to focus on both form and meaning, especially when the form in question is crucial to the meaning being conveyed. Support for this is provided by Lightbown [1998] when she states:

It is when the targeted forms do not contribute crucially to the principal meaning in focus that learners experience acute problems attending to both. When the forms in focus is an important carrier of the meaning in focus, learners do benefit from the dual focus on forms and meaning. [p. 192]

Through negotiated interaction (and the linguistic feedback provided through this interaction) learners can focus their attention on linguistic form, “making it salient and thereby creating a context for learning.” [Mackey, Gass and McDonough, 2000, p. 476]. At this time (especially when the intended meaning is transparent) learners may already be alerted and oriented to the form, and there is an increased likelihood that the conversational adjustments (e.g., repetitions, reformulations, expansions, extensions, and recasts) would be noticed [Long, 1996], and more easily detected [Tomlin and Villa, 1993]. Detection is of particular significance, as it is “the process by which particular exemplars are registered in memory and therefore could be made accessible to whatever the key processes are for learning, such as hypothesis formation and testing” [Tomlin and Villa, 1994, p. 192 –193].

Exactly which language forms learners can attend to depends on a number of factors. Pienemann [1989] identified one of these factors to be the learnability of the structure. Pienemann points out that learners can only learn a particular structure when they are psycholinguistically ready to do so. Readiness in this context means that learners have the precise processing pre-requisites for learning the structure, which is dependent on their developmental level. In other words, “if learners are not at the correct developmental level they will not acquire the structure, it is supposedly unlearnable, unteachable, and untreatable” [Mackey and Philp, 1998, p. 340].

While the results from many of the negotiation for meaning studies have validated the claims made by Long [1981, 1983, 1996], a number of studies have presented possible

cautions and qualifications related to its utility in SLA. Two studies have suggested that the kind of elaborate input that can result from negotiation does not always aid comprehension. Derwing [1989] and Ehrlich, Avery and Yorio [1989] found that the embroidering strategy adopted by native speakers as they negotiated meaning with non-native speakers provided information that expanded and embellished beyond what was required. They suggested that this caused problems for the learners by making it difficult for them to identify essential information that resulted in more communication problems. Further, both Aston [1986] and Hawkins [1985] have pointed out that negotiation can be irritating and demoralising for learners. Alternatively, learners may elect to feign understanding to facilitate the smooth flow of conversation and avoid embarrassment.

In another study, Foster [1998] found that in the classroom environment, very few learners were willing to negotiate for meaning. Therefore, Foster concludes that uncoached negotiation for meaning is unlikely to occur. She recommends that tasks which encourage the negotiation of form have greater potential capacity for promoting interaction and interlanguage growth than tasks which are designed to promote negotiation of meaning. However, this is contrary to the claims made by Long [1996], that language tasks should primarily focus learner attention on using the language to achieve communicative goals rather than solving problems of linguistic form, particularly in the language classroom.

In contrast to the above arguments, there is some evidence to suggest that in the classroom learners can modify their utterances as a way of making them more

comprehensible, especially when engaged in activities designed to promote negotiation of meaning [Doughty and Pica, 1986; Oliver, 1995a, 2000; Ernst, 1994]. However, a number of factors can affect both the quantity and nature of the negotiated routines that can occur in the classroom, such as the setting (e.g., teacher fronted lessons or group work) [Doughty and Pica, 1986; Ellis and Heimbach, 1997; Oliver, 2000], age [Oliver, 2000], the types of tasks used [Doughty and Pica, 1986; Pica, Kanagy and Faloutian, 1993], and familiarity with particular aspects of a task [Plough and Gass, 1993; Robinson, 2001]. With the exception of Oliver and Ellis and Heimbach, most studies have investigated how these factors affect adults when they negotiate for meaning. Therefore, an area that needs to be explored further is that of children negotiating for meaning.

2.3 Output

Claims regarding the role of production in the learning process are based on observations that second language comprehension in itself does not appear to be sufficient for second language acquisition. As Swain [1985] has observed, it is possible for learners to understand the meaning of an utterance without reliance on or recognition of its morphology or syntax. Accumulated evidence of this is found in Canadian Immersion Programmes where after providing a rich source of comprehensible input second language learners failed to attain a high level of grammatical proficiency [Hammerley, 1987; Harley and Swain, 1978]. Swain [1985] argues that what students need is not only comprehensible input but also the opportunity for comprehensible output if they are to be both fluent and accurate in the target language.

Swain believes that acquisition is assisted when learners are 'pushed' to make their output comprehensible. When learners experience communication difficulties, they may come to question the language they have produced. In this process, learners are 'pushed' into making their output more precise, coherent and accurate. This is what forces learners to move from semantic to syntactic processing in ways simple access to comprehensible input does not [Swain and Lapkin, 1995].

Comprehensible output can facilitate acquisition in a number of ways [Swain, 1985]. Firstly, output can serve a consciousness raising function by helping learners to notice gaps in their interlanguage [Schmidt and Frota, 1986]. Swain and Lapkin [1995, p. 373] point out that "in producing the target language, learners may encounter a problem leading them to recognise what they know, or know only partially." This recognition may prompt learners to seek out relevant input with more focussed attention [Schmidt, 1994]. Secondly, through receiving non comprehension signals, learners may come to question the language they have produced and reconsider their interlanguage hypotheses [Pica, Holliday, Lewis and Morgenthaler, 1989; Nobuyoshi and Ellis, 1993]. As a result learners may experiment with new structures and forms to see what works and what does not. According to Tarone and Liu [1995, p. 120], it is precisely those contexts "where the learner needs to produce output which the current interlanguage system cannot handle ... [and so] ...pushes the limits of that interlanguage system to make it handle that output" that acquisition is most likely to occur. Finally, it can help learners to develop metalinguistic knowledge of how the second language works. This occurs when students have the opportunity to talk and reflect about their output, identify problems with it and

discuss ways to improve it. Swain and Lapkin [1998] refer to these occasions as 'language related episodes'. Such episodes arise when learners temporarily collaborate to work out how to express meaning accurately.

Swain [1985, 1995] proposes that it is possible to design tasks that get students to produce language and then reflect upon its structure, and that this in turn will cause them to modify their output. Polio and Gass [1998] point out that task performance is influenced by students' abilities and knowledge in how to carry out their respective roles in particular tasks. This may reflect students' previous experiences with certain types of tasks, which may have an effect on their opportunities to produce output as described by Swain [1985]. What is unclear is the extent to which familiarity with a task type has an effect on opportunities for "pushed output" (i.e., demands for correct and appropriate use of the L2) in order to develop grammatical features that may not be acquired purely on the basis of comprehending input.

2.4 Feedback

It is well acknowledged that comprehensible input is necessary for second language acquisition, and that interaction provides a basis from which learners can receive input in the form of feedback on the clarity and precision of their interlanguage. Further, interactionists such as Long [1996] suggest that for acquisition to occur both positive and negative evidence are required. Positive evidence and the various forms of negative evidence are shown in Figure 1. Positive evidence provides the learner with a model of what is possible and grammatical in the target language. Negative evidence provides

information to the learner about what is not possible in the target language [White, 1987]. That is, it indicates to the learner what is ungrammatical in the language. According to Long [1996], negative evidence can be provided in two forms: it can be provided preemptively (e.g., through the teaching of grammar rules), or reactively to repair errors after they have occurred. Oliver [2000, p. 120] points out that reactive negative evidence “highlights differences between the target language and a learner’s output and as such is often described as negative feedback.” Of most importance are the implicit forms of negative feedback, which are now regarded as an important part of the information learners can attend to in the environment [Long, 1996; Mackey, 1999; Oliver, 2000]. Implicit forms of negative feedback can be provided in the form of negotiated strategies (e.g., when learners negotiate for meaning), or in the form of ‘recasts’ that occur in response to learner’s non target like utterances. Both Oliver [2000] and Mackey [1999] provide support for Long’s [1996] updated version of the interaction hypothesis that implicit negative feedback promotes L2 development.

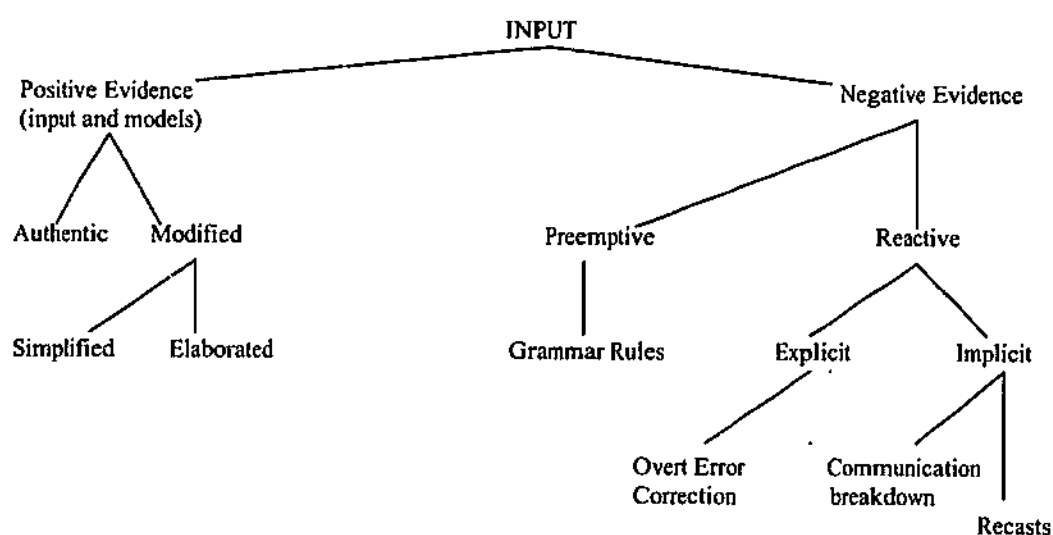


Figure 1 Data for SLA [Long and Robinson, 1998, p. 19]

The process of negotiation is said to provide feedback to learners about their attempts in the target language [Long and Robinson, 1998]. It tells them when “something has gone wrong in the transmission of a message” [Schachter, 1982, p 183]. Learners may then come to question the language they have produced and consider changing their output to make it more comprehensible [Schachter, 1982, 1984, 1986].

Pica [1994, p. 502] argues that “learners need to focus on L2 form to master the L2 system.” The feedback provided by negotiation provides learners with metalinguistic information on the clarity, accuracy and comprehensibility of their interlanguage grammar system. In interactional contexts where learners need to produce output that their current interlanguage system cannot handle, they may be expected to pay close attention to the interactional help offered. Further, a learner in search of the right word or structure is a learner who is open to noticing feedback when it is given [Schmidt and Frota, 1986; Tarone and Lui, 1995]. Therefore, learners may “have the immediate opportunity to receive input on the necessary element of language, which is as extended as they need and can be customised to fit their level” [Mackey, 1999, p. 582].

Whether or not learners (e.g., NNS-NNS dyads) are active providers of feedback to each other has been investigated in a number of studies [Gass and Varonis, 1985, 1989; Pica and Doughty, 1985; Porter, 1983, 1986; and Oliver, 1999]. Evidence shows that not only can NNSs provide feedback to each other as they negotiate towards message comprehensibility, but they do so to a greater extent. Porter [1986] found adult learners

prompt each other five times more than NSs prompt NNSs. Also NNS-NNS dyads contribute more in the negotiation process when they work towards reaching a solution than do NS-NNS dyads, where a topic switch is more likely to occur [Pica, 1987; Varonis and Gass, 1985]. One suggestion for this is that NNSs feel more secure to request and respond to negotiation strategies when conversing with another learner as they “do not lose face by negotiating meaning in the same way they might with native speakers” [Varonis and Gass, 1985, p. 85]. Research results with children have also shown that feedback is provided more frequently in NNS-NNS dyads, however the extent of this occurring depends on the age of the children [Oliver, 1999]. Younger children (5-7 years of age) negotiate in slightly lower proportions than older children (8-13 years of age).

Although it is established that negotiation of meaning occurs with greater frequency in NNS-NNS dyads, there are researchers who have reported that such interactions may promote classroom dialects [Larsen-Freeman, 1985] or pidginization [Aston, 1986]. Pidginisation reflects the incorporation of features from languages other than the target language, as has been documented in Schumann’s [1978] work. Further, it is claimed that NNS’s will not be able to provide enough linguistic feedback because of the persistent nontargetlike language exchanged between interlocutors. However, Porter [1983] found that learners of both intermediate and advanced levels were competent to negotiate meaning in a manner similar to native speakers, and that learners only repeated a very small amount of the faulty input they heard [Pica and Doughty, 1985; Porter, 1986]. Also evidence provided by Gass and Varonis [1989] shows that learners negotiate towards the target language, and not towards a restricted or less targetlike form.

Another form of implicit negative feedback that has received a considerable amount of attention in the literature has been the use of recasts. Recasts are described as a redisplay of the learner's utterance, when the syntactic structure is reformulated but where the central meaning remains unchanged [Baker and Nelson, 1984; Farrar, 1990, 1992; Furrow, Baille, McLaren and More, 1993; Nelson, Carskaddon and Bonvillian, 1973; Long, 1996; Oliver, 1995a, 1995b, 2000; Braid, 2002]. Long [1996] describes four properties of recasts which can explain their facilitative role, they: (a) reformulate the utterance of the learner; (b) expand the learner's utterance; (c) retain the original meaning of the learner's utterance; and (d) immediately follows the incorrect utterance. The last point is important as it provides learners with the opportunity to cognitively compare their utterance with a semantically correct version of it [Long, 1996]. Further, recasts are usually provided when learners are fully involved in a meaningful conversation, especially when they are personally interested in the topic [Nelson, 1987, 1988].

Recasts are not only evident when NNS adults interact, but they also exist when NNS children interact. Evidence provided by Oliver [1995b] indicates that child native speakers can provide recasts to their NNS peers while performing information gap tasks. Also, children can provide recasts to each other while working in pairs [Oliver, 1999].

Long [1996] points out that negative feedback (including recasts) plays an important and necessary role in the acquisition of particular L2 structures. It can "induce noticing of the kinds of forms for which comprehensible input will not suffice, for example, items that

are unlearnable from positive evidence, or are rare, or perceptually non-salient, or cause little or no communicative distress" [Long and Robinson, 1998, p. 23]. Previous support for this is provided by White [1991] who points out that for some second language structures learners need negative feedback in order to acquire the correct form. By this, she means that negative feedback is needed for learners to recognise the inadequacy of their own rule system, "this is because second language learners sometimes make incorrect generalisations (in many cases based on the mother tongue) that cannot be disconfirmed by positive evidence alone" [White, 1991, p. 134].

Interest in negative feedback, and, in particular recasts, derives from literature in the area of first language acquisition. Earlier researchers, [e.g., Brown and Hanlon, 1970] concentrated on only explicit error correction as a form of negative feedback and results indicated that only the semantic truthfulness (e.g., incorrect naming) prompted feedback. As this form of negative feedback was seen as occurring infrequently in natural settings, it was not regarded as an important factor in language acquisition [Chun, Day, Chenoweth and Lupescu, 1982]. However, by employing a broader definition of what negative feedback may actually mean (e.g., to include both negotiation strategies and recasts) several researchers have since argued that its importance in language learning has been overlooked [Bohannon and Stanowicz, 1988; Penner, 1987; Snow, 1986]. For instance Bohannon and Stanowicz [1988] reported that adults were more likely to provide a recast of children's ill formed sentences than their well formed sentences. Further, Farrar [1990, 1992] found that children were two or three times more likely to imitate recasts than other forms of parental responses to their incorrect utterances, and that

children can attend to and notice incorrect forms as a result of the increased salience of the recasted utterance. Also, Bohannon, MacWhinney, and Snow [1990] point out that negative feedback does not need to be provided every time a learner produces an incorrect utterance for it to be usable. They base their argument on the results provided by Levine (1959, 1963) who has shown that concepts may be learned and hypotheses accurately confirmed with less than 25% of the trials using feedback.

Empirical evidence shows that recasts can lead to modification of L2 learners' output. [Mackey and Philp, 1998; Doughty and Varela, 1998; Long, Inagaki and Ortega, 1998; Oliver, 1995b, 2000]. For example, studies with both adolescent and adult learners have found that recasts are selectively beneficial for the acquisition of certain aspects of the L2. Mackey and Philp [1998, p. 338] in particular show support for the positive effect of intensive recasts in "facilitating an increase in production of targeted higher level morphosyntactic forms" for advanced level learners. Also, results provided by Doughty and Varela [1998] indicate that adolescent learners who were given recasts showed greater improvements in the accuracy of certain past tense forms. Further, Long, Inagaki and Ortega [1998] found that recasts were more effective than pre-emptive positive input (such as models) in achieving improvements on previously unknown L2 structures.

A challenge to the role of recasts, particularly with respect to feedback and the noticing of it, is given by Lyster [1998]. Lyster [1998, p. 51] states that from the perspective of both learners and teachers, the "corrective reformulations entailed in recasts may be easily over ridden by their functional properties in meaning oriented classrooms." As a

consequence, learners may not immediately respond to a recast when it is given.

However, Mackey and Philp [1998] point out that this should not mean that learners are not able to benefit from the recast in the long term. Likewise, Gass and Varonis [1994, p. 286] have argued that “the absence of short term effects does not exclude the possibility of long term effects when the learner has had sufficient time to process and incorporate the feedback.” This suggests that restructuring following destabilisation of the learner’s underlying interlanguage system as a result of a recast may not be immediately evident [Lightbown, 1994; 1998; Polio and Gass, 1998].

According to Allwright and Bailey [1991, p. 104], “simple repetition or modelling of the correct form may be useless if the learners cannot perceive the difference between the model and the erroneous forms they produce.” Although this may be the case, they still suggest that learners be allowed both “time and opportunity for self generated repair” [Allwright and Bailey, 1991, p. 107]. Chaudron [1988] states that giving learners the opportunity to self correct in this way is more likely to improve their ability in monitoring their own language. This is supported by Van Lier [1988, p. 211] who argues that teachers should delay the use of “corrective techniques that deny the speaker the opportunity to do self-repair.”

Long [1996] also points out that negative feedback (including recasts) may at times be too ambiguous for learners to take any notice of it. For example, “intonation and contextual cues may be required, but may be unavailable or too subtle for the NNS to determine whether a NS response is a model of the correct way or just a different way of

saying the same thing” [Long, 1996, p.449]. However, Rost [1992] points out that if the content in tasks is contextualized, and learners have a shared understanding (background knowledge) of what is being talked about, interaction between participants is made easier. As a result, learners will have more of an opportunity to infer what a learner is trying to say [Stern, 1992], and notice particular items in the input more easily. In this way, familiarity may assist learners in monitoring certain linguistic elements in their interlanguage system [Richards, 1999]. Thus, familiarization of the content of a task may have an effect on the way learners perceive and have an opportunity to access the negative feedback given to them. However, the extent to which this has an effect with primary school children is unknown.

2.5 Feedback for Child Second Language Learners

It has been argued that adults learn a second language differently than do children [McLaughlin, 1981; Scarella and Higa, 1981]. Adults have greater cognitive maturity, more efficient information-processing techniques, and superior mnemonic devices [Harley, 1986; McLaughlin, 1981]. Thus children may have a greater need to negotiate for meaning because their ‘restricted’ abilities will lead to more communication breakdowns [Harley, 1986]. However, whether children are able to “translate this need into reality is unclear from the literature”[Oliver, 1998, p. 373].

Scarella and Higa [1981] point out that in a natural setting the conversational demands placed on learners by native speakers are greater for adults than for children. Therefore, adult learners take a more active role than child learners in negotiating understanding and

sustaining conversations. Research findings by Cathcart-Strong [1986] support this notion. According to Scarcella and Higa [1981], it is through such active negotiation work that older learners succeed in obtaining a sufficient quantity of challenging input. In contrast, child learners may receive more simplified input, but because they do not work as hard at negotiating, the input they receive may be too simple to promote further L2 development or too difficult for the child to understand [Harley, 1986]. Thus, it is clear from the literature that the amount of negotiation for meaning is affected by the age of the participants [Plough and Gass, 1993], although the extent of the effect is uncertain [Oliver, 1998].

Evidence from research findings by Oliver [1998] suggest that although primary school children can negotiate for meaning, the difference in the way they negotiate compared to the way adults negotiate can be seen in the proportional use of particular strategies:

Possibly because of their level of development and their purported egocentric nature, primary school children tend to focus on constructing their own meaning, and less on facilitating their partners construction of meaning. Thus, they are more likely to use clarification requests, confirmation checks and repetitions, but tend not to use comprehension checks. [p.379]

Oliver's [1995b] study of negative feedback with primary age children indicated that NSs provide feedback in response to NNSs grammatical errors (rather than ignoring these errors totally). However, the form of this feedback (e.g., whether it was a negotiated strategy or a recast etc) was influenced by the type and complexity of the errors made. In addition, child L2 learners were observed to

correctly incorporate 10% of all recasts, and over a third when the conversation provided an appropriate opportunity to do so. Thus, Oliver (with regard to child second language learners) concluded that “not only does negative evidence exist for second language learners, but it is also usable and used by them in the language acquisition process”[1995b, p.559].

Oliver’s [2000] study on negative feedback shows that the context of interaction may have an effect on the form in which this feedback is provided and the extent to which there are appropriate opportunities to use it. Oliver found child learners in an ESL setting were provided with more recasts in teacher fronted lessons and were able to negotiate more while working in pairs. Further, more appropriate opportunities were recorded for children to use this feedback during pair work. In a study on the effects of meaning negotiations on young children’s acquisition of word meanings, Ellis and Heimbach [1997] also found child learners varied in their ability or willingness to negotiate according to two different contexts. They found that children were able to negotiate more effectively when part of a small group rather than individually while working with the teacher. These results therefore suggest that it is important to consider context as an important variable when planning further research in this area, especially where children are concerned.

Carrol and Swain [1993] point out that very young children may not be able to interpret the negative feedback that is provided to them, because they have not developed the

metalinguistic awareness skills necessary for them to do so. This is supported in the results provided by first language acquisition studies [Snyder, 1914; Clark, 1978; Villers and Villers, 1972; Gleitman, Gleitman and Shipley, 1972; Tunner and Grieve, 1984]. Results from such research suggest that children from 2 to 3 years of age appear to judge sentences in terms of whether or not they are understood, accepting sentences they think they understand, while rejecting those they find incomprehensible [Tunmer and Grieve, 1984]. Somewhat older children, aged 4 to 5 years, adopt a content criterion, rejecting many sentences that they understand but which say things they either do not believe or do not like [Gleitman, Gleitman and Shipley, 1972]. It is not until around the age of 6 to 7 years that children become able to separate the form of a sentence from its content, and identify sentences as acceptable or not, solely on linguistic grounds [De-Villers and De-Villers, 1972]. These findings are supported by Brown and DeLoache [1978] who see metalinguistic abilities developing gradually during early school years with children first making use of the skills in familiar contexts which are intrinsically interesting to them.

2.6 Tasks

The vast amount of research into the effect different types of tasks have in learning a second language is having a considerable impact on pedagogy [Nunan, 1988; Robinson, 2001]. A great deal of this research has focussed on the effect different tasks have on the process of negotiating for meaning. The goal of this research has been to establish which task types and conditions generate the most negotiation of meaning [Doughty and Pica, 1986; Gass and Varonis, 1985; Pica and Doughty, 1985; Pica, Kanagy and Falodun, 1993]. The importance of implementing tasks has also been researched by Crookes and

Rulon [1985] who examined the issue of the incorporation of implicit negative feedback by NNSs in three situations: one free conversation and two two-way communication tasks. They found significantly more feedback in task-related conversations than in free conversations.

Crookes [1986, p. 14] defines a task "as a piece of work or an activity, usually with a specified objective, undertaken as part of an educational course, or at work." This definition refers to the idea of some kind of activity designed to engage the learner in using the language communicatively in order to achieve an outcome through the exchange of meanings [Long, 1981; Gass and Varonis, 1985; Pica, Young and Doughty, 1987]. A task, so defined, can be a real world activity or a contrived, pedagogic activity [Nunan, 1989], as long as it engages the learner in using the language purposefully and co-operatively [Willis, 1996].

There are a number of different ways for categorising certain features of tasks. One way is to categorise tasks according to the flow of information from one learner to another [Long, 1983]. For example, a one way task is a task where there is a one way exchange of information (i.e., when information is given by one person only), while a two way task is an activity where each partner has a significant, but incomplete set of information that needs to be shared in order to complete the task correctly. Long's [1983] study (with adult learners) showed that two way tasks are more conducive of negotiation work than tasks involving only a one way exchange of information. Doughty and Pica [1986] confirm these results. In contrast to these findings, Gass and Varonis [1985] found no

difference between the number of non-understanding routines (a measure of meaning negotiation) in tasks requiring a one way or two way exchange of information. However, Gass and Varonis point out that because their one way task was less one way than Long's [1983], it is not clear how their results compare. Therefore, Gass and Varonis [1985, p. 159] suggest that the distinction "between one way and two way is better seen as continuous rather than a dichotomous variable...makes[ing] comparison a complex process."

Alternatively, tasks have also been categorised according to the extent to which participants are obliged to share information. For tasks to promote interaction there must be a real need to share information. Tasks that require participants to share vital information generate more modifications of interaction than tasks that just encourage participants to share opinions or ideas [Hawkins, 1985; Long, 1980; Pica, 1987; Doughty and Pica, 1986; Pica and Doughty, 1985, 1988]. Tasks that compel students to share have been referred to as 'required information exchange tasks' to emphasise the obligatory nature of supplying information to one another. These tasks (such as jigsaw tasks) place all participants in equal positions, each with the same amount of information, which must be exchanged to reach the task outcome. In contrast, tasks that do not require participants to share information or contribute to the solution of a problem have been referred to as 'optional exchange tasks'. An example of an optional exchange task would be a debate where participants can decide for themselves if they want to participate actively or not [Doughty and Pica, 1986; Pica, Kanagy and Falodun, 1993].

Researchers have also categorised tasks according to the possible number of outcomes inherent in a particular task [Duff, 1986; Pica and Doughty, 1988]. Tasks can be distinguished according to whether participants share the same goals or have different goals, and whether the goals contain only one acceptable outcome (a convergent task) or whether many outcomes are possible (a divergent task). Duff [1986] found convergent tasks produce more negotiation work and more useful negotiation work than do divergent tasks. In a comparison of NNS-NNS interaction on a problem solving simulation (convergent task) and a debate (divergent task), Duff found significantly more confirmation checks in the convergent task. Similar claims are made by Long [1989]. Long refers to convergent tasks as closed tasks and divergent tasks as open tasks and points out that closed tasks elicit more negotiation of meaning and language recycling, and more precision which are likely to lead to provision and incorporation of feedback, and hence to interlanguage destabilization.

As a way of synthesising the information about the tasks described above, Pica, Kanagy and Falodun [1993] provide a classification table on what different task types offer language teachers. The table aims to distinguish tasks from less efficient activities for their work with language learners, and to differentiate among individual tasks so that researchers can target them according to a variety of instructional and research purposes. The framework used in generating the table attempts to show how each of the task types listed can be distinguished according to four different categories: interactant relationship (or flow of information), interactant requirement, goal orientation, and outcome option. While analysing the table and referring to research in this area, Pica Kanagy and Falodun

[1993] conclude that two way information gap or jigsaw activities are most likely to generate opportunities for interactants to work towards processes related to successful second language acquisition. The fewest opportunities would be found in opinion exchange tasks. In these tasks any number of outcome options, including no outcome at all is possible. There is also no requirement to participate in these tasks. The table is provided below.

Table 1

Communication Task Types L2 Research and Pedagogy Analysis Based on: Interactant (X/Y) Relationships and Requirements in Communicating Information (INF) to Achieve Task Goals

Task Type	INF Holder	INF Requester	INF Supplier	Relationship	Interactant Requirement	Goal orientation	Outcome options
Jigsaw	X&Y	X&Y	X&Y	2 way(XtoY&YtoX)	+required	+convergent	1
Information Gap	XorY	YorX	XorY	1way>2way(XtoY/YtoX)	+required	+convergent	1
Problem Solving	X=Y	X=Y	X=Y	2way>1way(XtoY&YtoX)	- required	+convergent	1
Decision Making	X=Y	X=Y	X=Y	2way>1way(XtoY&YtoX)	- required	+convergent	1+
Opinion Exchange	X=Y	X=Y	X=Y	2way>1way(XtoY&YtoX)	- required	- convergent	1+/-

[Pica, Kanagy and Falodun, 1993, p. 19]

In contrast to the research discussed above, studies conducted by Foster [1998] lead her to suggest that task type on its own does not have an effect on the amount of negotiation work being conducted in classrooms. "It was the dyad setting, coupled with the obligation to exchange information, that was the 'best' for language production,

negotiations and modified output” [Foster, 1998, p. 534]. Foster found there were a number of students who did not speak or initiate any negotiated interaction while working in small group situations. This may be related to what Aston [1986] suggested, namely that group-work tasks designed to maximize negotiation for meaning may end up discouraging students by making them feel unsuccessful and ineffective. Therefore, Foster [1998] claims that uncoached negotiation for meaning may not be alive and well in many classrooms. Foster [1998] also states that the setting of tasks in her study was in a classroom, and not a venue specially arranged for data collection, and that this is a significant variable that should be considered when conducting future research in this area.

In addition to investigating the effect different tasks have on the process of negotiating for meaning (and the way they are carried out), researchers have found that the complexity of a task can also have an effect on task performance. According to Robinson [2001], complexity is “the result of the attentional, memory, reasoning, and other information processing demands imposed by the structure of the task on the language learner” [2001, p. 2]. Therefore, certain tasks are seen to be more complex than others. For example, Long [1985b] states that tasks requiring present tense, context supported reference are simpler than those requiring the management of reference to objects and events dislocated in time and space, and that these tasks can have an effect on the development of language. Similarly, Robinson [1995] gives evidence that complex tasks (‘there and then’) elicit less fluent, but more accurate and complex production than do simpler tasks (‘here and now’). “Differences in measures of learner production are a

consequence of differences in the cognitive load imposed by the tasks –a claim generalizable to tasks of many different types” [Robinson, 1995, p. 130]. Thus, Robinson argues that increasing task complexity forces learners to attend more to input and output. Increased attention to input and output results from greater communicative consequences and functional demands. For this reason, Robinson [1995, p. 130] states that the “additional cognitive effort expended by learners on more complex tasks, together with a perceived need for communicative resource expansion in order to successfully complete the task will create conditions for language development”.

More recent research with adult learners on task complexity shows that complexity can exert a considerable influence on the way learners negotiate for meaning [Robinson 2001]. For instance, Robinson describes task complexity as consisting of a number of different dimensions which can be manipulated in the design of a task. These dimensions include the degree of contextual support, prior knowledge of the content, the number of different elements inherent in the task, the reasoning demands and the provision of planning time. These dimensions interact with other factors, such as participant variables (e.g., gender, familiarity with task role), and with affective variables (e.g., motivation, anxiety etc). Although Robinson states that variation in task production can not be attributed to any one factor or dimension of that factor alone, results from his research point out that information receivers in adult NNS–NNS dyads display more confirmation checks and clarification requests in complex versions of tasks (where a lack of prior knowledge of the content was a significant contributor to complexity) due to the additional communication problems resulting from these tasks. Thus the level of

complexity of a task is an important variable that should be considered as it has an effect on interaction, language production and negotiation of meaning [Gass and Varonis, 1985; Robinson, 2001]. However, the extent this applies to young children is yet to be determined.

It is clear from research conducted to date that familiarity of a task is an important factor that can affect the language produced between interactants. Brown and Yule [1983] state that familiarity of a task includes prior knowledge of the demands of a particular type of task, and the content or background knowledge inherent in the topic of a task. In a study on the effects of practice Brown, Anderson, Shillcock and Yule [1984] found that familiarity with the structure of a task gave the opportunity for adolescent learners to clarify the procedural aspects of the task, especially if they had experience in both the speaker's and hearer's role. Also Anderson, Yule and Brown [1984, p. 23] found that "prior experience in the hearer's role proved particularly beneficial in sensitizing speakers to their hearer's information requirements", which resulted in better communicative performances. Further, research has also found that this can lead to a greater tendency to negotiate for meaning, such as checking for comprehension, and seeking confirmation that information has been interpreted correctly [Yule and Macdonald, 1990; Yule, 1991; Yule, Powers and Macdonald, 1992]. Prior knowledge of the content of a task can affect performance in several ways. Results provided by Robinson [2001] with adult learners show that familiarity can affect the level of referential explicitness required to complete a task. If learners are unfamiliar with the content of a task then they may fail to interpret the clues given by indicators of time and

place, therefore this will have an impact on the number of communication breakdowns and the amount of negotiation work which occurs. However, whether young children react in the same way is not known.

One way of making a task more familiar is by providing opportunities for learners to repeat a particular task. Studies on task repetition with adults show how repeated performances with the same task can have a positive effect on the language produced by learners. These studies are based on what Skehan and Foster [1997] call the 'cognitive approach' or the 'information processing perspective' to tasks. Both Bygate [1996] and Lynch and Maclean [2000] report that repetitions enable learners to familiarise themselves with the content, thus freeing up attentional resources so they can focus on the form of their output. Results show that repetition yields greater accuracy in morphosyntactic structures, and results in greater lexical sophistication. Some support for this claim is also provided by Gass, Mackey, Torres and Garcia [1999]. However, what is unclear is exactly how repetition of the same or a similar task (of equal complexity) affects the way learners negotiate for meaning and provide feedback to each other, especially where children are concerned - an area neglected in SLA research.

There has been a significant quantity of research into task implementation conditions, exploring choices available before a task is done, while a task is carried out, and after a task is completed. Ways of making a task more familiar and the effect this has on students' performance in language production has also been addressed in some of this research [e.g., Skehan, 1996; Willis and Willis, 1988; Robinson, 2001; Richards, 1999].

The purpose of providing pre-task activities is to increase the chance that some “restructuring will occur in the underlying language system,” [Skehan, 1996, p. 53]. Pre task activities can be categorised into two groups. The first includes explicit or implicit teaching of the relevant language needed for a task, which can be achieved through the use of inductive learning activities [Doughty, 1991]; consciousness raising activities [Willis, 1996]; or by providing a similar pre task activity (before the real task) with some form of teaching of the language learners need to do the activity [Prabhu, 1987; Willis and Willis, 1988]. These activities aim to make salient the language that will be relevant for task performance. The second category aims to assist learners’ recall of schematic knowledge relevant to the task, thus releasing more attentional space for the actual language that is used [Skehan, 1996, 2000; Van Pattern, 1990, 1996]. As a result more complex language can be attempted [Crookes, 1989; Mehnert, 1998], with greater accuracy [Skehan and Foster, 1997]. This can be accomplished by observing similar tasks on video, or by reading transcripts of related tasks [Willis and Willis, 1988]. Learners could similarly be given related pre-tasks to do [Prabhu, 1987]. The type of pre task which has received a great deal of attention in the literature is that of planning [Mehnert, 1998; Foster and Skehan, 1996; Skehan and Foster, 1997;], “either of the language that they will need to use, or of the meanings that they want to express” [Skehan, 1996, p.54]. Results provided by Foster and Skehan, [1996] and Skehan and Foster, [1997] point out that planning interacts with the degree of structure of the task concerned (e.g., greater fluency for unplanned-structured tasks and greater accuracy for planned-structured tasks). Planning has also been reported to affect the way adult learners negotiate for meaning.

According to Robinson [1999, 2001] unplanned-unstructured tasks will consume more attentional resources leading to more communication breakdowns, and hence will require more negotiation of meaning.

There have also been some studies on how mid task manipulations and activities can have an impact on language production. Results from these studies (with adult learners) have shown that: introducing surprise information in the middle of a task can have some effect on linguistic output [Foster and Skehan, 1999]; providing visual support can free attentional resources for a focus on form [Robinson, 1995; Brown, Anderson, Shillcock, and Yule, 1984]; the amount of time allowed during a task can affect the amount of interaction and thus negotiation [Gass and Varonis, 1994]; and giving learners the opportunity to decide for themselves how to proceed with a task provides opportunities to negotiate for meaning [Breen, 1987]. Therefore, the way tasks are implemented may have an impact upon the amount and type of interaction that occurs. It can also determine whether a “task is carried out fluently and with an acceptable level of linguistic performance, or disfluently with excessive dependence on communication strategies” [Richards, 1999, p. 7].

The final aspect of this type of analysis is the description of what happens after a task is completed. “What happens after the task itself can have an impact on how the task is actually done” [Skehan, 2000, p. 20]. It has also been reported that this can change the amount of attention learners pay to form and/or to meaning [Skehan & Foster, 1997; Skehan, 1998, 2000]. For example, results from adult studies have shown that if learners

know that their work will be analysed [Skehan, 1998], or if they have to prepare a public performance [Skehan and Foster, 1997], then they pay increased attention to the accuracy of their language [Skehan and Foster, 1997; Skehan, 2000]. Therefore, learners may become more conscious of the syntactic forms that are needed to express the meanings in the way they want to convey them, with an increased capacity for self monitoring [Richards, 1999]. More studies are needed to investigate whether these results apply to young children.

2.7 Familiarity

Although a number of studies have focussed on the effects of familiarity on the way adults interact, there is little research focussing on its effects when children do so. Results with adult NNSs show that the various types of familiarity (e.g., interlocutor familiarity, task type familiarity and content familiarity) can have an effect on the way learners negotiate for meaning, and that familiarity needs to be considered as an important factor when examining the quantity and nature of the negotiated routines between learners [Gass and Varonis, 1985; Plough and Gass, 1993; Robinson, 2001]. Further, Alcon and Guzman (1995) point out that familiarity (especially content familiarity) can account for differences in the way adult learners participate in a conversation.

The effect of familiarity of the content of a task has also been addressed in research studies under the auspices of prior knowledge. The critical role prior knowledge plays in language comprehension receives support from research outside the field of SLA

[Anderson, Spiro, and Anderson, 1978; Anderson, 1981; Joseph and Dwyer, 1984] as well as from within it [Barry and Lazarte, 1998]. The role it plays has been articulated in schema theory and documented in the work of Anderson [1981], Joseph and Dwyer [1984], and Chiang and Dunkel [1992]. The basic tenet of schema theory posits that written or spoken discourse does not carry meaning in and of itself. Rather meaning occurs as a result of the interaction between the readers' or listeners' prior knowledge (rooted in life experiences) about the world and the text or speech [Chiang and Dunkel, 1992]. D. Long [1989a] points out that this world knowledge enables individuals to make inferences and form expectations about commonplace situations. According to Rumelhart [1980], when speakers engaging in a conversation do not share the same world knowledge they may utilize inappropriate schemata. If this occurs, comprehension of the message may fail [Gass and Varonis, 1984], as a result there will be a need to negotiate for meaning in order for both speakers to continue their role in the conversation [Long, 1983; Rulon & McCreary, 1986; Varonis & Gass, 1985; Pica, Young & Doughty, 1987; Pica, 1994].

Gass and Varonis [1984] report on a study that investigated the effects of various types of familiarity on native speaker comprehension of non-native speaker speech. They researched the effects of not only content familiarity, but also familiarity with non-native speech in general, familiarity with non-native accent, and familiarity with an interlocutor as a person. Results indicated that while the most important of these variables is familiarity with content, the other variables had a facilitating effect on comprehension.

In another study, Gass and Varonis [1985] present results from adult NNS interactions while completing both a one-way and a two-way information gap task. Their results indicate that there is less of an opportunity for breakdown in the two-way task since there is greater shared background in that task than there is in the one way task. That is, there is a shared set of assumptions of the content in the two-way tasks, but not in one-way tasks. This result reaffirms Labov and Fanshel's [1977, p. 82] finding, based on adult NS-NS conversations, that "most of the information needed to interpret actions is already to be found in the structure of shared knowledge and not in the utterances themselves". However, the extent to which this applies to young children learning a second language still needs to be investigated.

Interlocutor familiarity is reported to affect the process of negotiation. Results from research studies with adult learners suggest that a greater willingness to negotiate for meaning may occur when participants (e.g., NNS-NNS dyads) are more familiar with one another as they are more comfortable to take the risk to ask for clarification when not sure of meaning [Plough and Gass, 1993]. However, Day, Chenoweth, Chun and Luppescu [1984] pointed out that familiarity with other speakers of the same language, with other speakers' interlanguage talk, ethnicity and educational background can heighten mutual understanding and decrease the need to negotiate for meaning. Whether children react in the same way is not known at present.

Wong-Fillmore [1985] in her study of young child second language learners points out that the most successful classes are those in which students know what to expect and

what to do procedurally, due to familiar routines and expectations. The consistency of having routines, and the language used in both presenting and conducting lessons provides a predictability which increases comprehension. With this view in mind Plough and Gass (1993) investigated whether familiarity with a particular task and the way tasks are presented effects the way NNS adults interact and negotiate for meaning. Overall, results from this study did not suggest that a strong relationship existed. In fact, it was noted that for those “involved in a task that they had never done displayed a greater involvement than those for whom the task was old hat” [Plough and Gass, 1993, p. 50]. Thus differences may exist in the way adults and children approach learning, however, before this statement can be substantiated, more research needs to be implemented to investigate other factors that may have a role to play.

Research indicates that a learner’s second language proficiency influences the extent to which they participate in a conversation, and can influence the amount of negotiation that occurs [Ellis, 1985]. Beebe and Giles [1984], Hatch [1992] and Scarcella [1983] have asserted that when non-native speakers interact with native speakers of the language, the native speakers generally tend to dominate the conversation. According to Beebe and Giles [1984], native speaker dominance maybe due to the NS’s higher linguistic status. However, Gaies [1982] suggests that NS control of NS-NNS interactions is not necessarily automatic. There are several variables which have an impact on the NS’s behaviour. According to Gaies [1982], shared knowledge (i.e., familiarity with the content) and the NNS’s proficiency level both act to set up expectations about the NNS’s ability to share in the conversational work. The NS will have an expectation that the NNS

can actively contribute to the conversation if they share knowledge of the topic (or what Selinker and Douglas [1985] refer to as the 'discourse domain').

A study by Woken and Swales [1989] of three NS-NNS dyads in task-orientated interactions illustrates the importance of domain knowledge on conversational participation. The task involved a NNS computer specialist teaching a NS (with little knowledge in computing) how to use a word – processing software. Conversational performance, which was measured with respect to questions, amount of talk, and directives, indicated that the NNSs were more active in building the conversation. Woken and Swales conclude that in their dyads, it is greater topic knowledge, which leads to NNS dominance. Unequal linguistic competence (which would favour the NS) is not as important in explaining participation.

Zuengler [1993] also points out that greater topic knowledge can override any limitations NNS's have in their oral proficiency, and enable them to be the 'talkers' in a conversation. In so doing, these conversations may provide the best opportunity for learners to perform this aspect of what Young [1992] calls their 'interactional competence'. For this reason, Zuengler [1993] states that there is no support for Hatch's [1992] generalization that NS's are active whereas NNS's are passive in conversations, as it depends on the NNS's familiarity with the content. Further, Alcon and Guzman [1995] point out that when adult learners with limited oral skills (working in NNS-NNS dyads) have greater content knowledge, they produce more words and more comprehension checks than more fluent speakers and, although not statistically different, more topic

moves. Thus they are able to negotiate for meaning. In more specific terms Alcon and Guzman [1995, p. 27] state: "It seems that the relative expert becomes an active talker, while the relative non-expert works hard in order to understand the message (number of clarifications and confirmations). The relative expert is also conscious of his knowledge, and makes greater use of comprehension checks". Whether this has a significant effect on the way young children interact is not known.

Zuengler and Bent [1991] and Zuengler [1993] also point out that if interactional involvement provides important opportunities for both language use and language acquisition, and if greater content knowledge facilitates more active conversational involvement (through the negotiation process), then learners should have extensive opportunity to be relative content experts. However, what is unclear from the literature is how would interlocutors (i.e., those who are of the same proficiency level) interact when they have relatively equal knowledge of the content, especially where children are concerned.

This literature review has explored important research within the fields of negotiation of meaning, age and second language acquisition, task and the notion of familiarity and its effect in comprehension and interaction. It is evident from this review that familiarity may effect the way interlocutors negotiate for meaning. However this has not been adequately studied in child populations.

2.8 Research Questions

Thus, based on the literature explored above, the following research questions are proposed:

- 1) How and to what extent does familiarity with the type of task affect the way primary school children negotiate for meaning, and provide and use implicit negative feedback, with age matched peers?
- 2) How and to what extent does familiarity with the content (or subject domain of a task) affect the way primary school children negotiate for meaning, and provide and use implicit negative feedback, with aged matched peers?

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Participants

Participants in this study were selected from a primary school in Western Australia in which 80% of students enrolled come from a Non English Speaking Background.

Specialist ESL Teachers work in the school to support children who are beginning to learn English as a Second Language. All participants had completed 10 to 14 months of English instruction.

Forty subjects were chosen from four junior primary classes and were selected according to a stratified random sampling procedure in order to obtain 20 boys and 20 girls aged between 7.0 to 8.6 years with equal language proficiency. At the school the ESL teachers referred to them as being more advanced in their ESL development compared to newly arrived learners with no knowledge of the English language. All subjects were then randomly selected to form 10 NNS male dyads and 10 NNS female dyads. Dyads did not constitute students who were speakers of the same first language. These pairs remained the same throughout the entire study. The composition of students first language background is provided in Appendix 1.

3.2 Language Proficiency

Language proficiency for each student was determined by using both the ESL Bandscales [Mckay, 1994], and the ESL Scales [ESL Scales, 1994]. Selection was based on students who were working in level 4 for both speaking and listening on the Bandscales, and level

3 for oral interaction on the ESL Scales (refer to Appendix 2 for a detailed description of these levels). These documents provide teachers with a reference for reporting on the ESL proficiency of their ESL learners in school contexts. Both scales were used in order to ensure reliability. The researcher worked with each classroom teacher when placing students on the scales so that indicators of progress in each document were interpreted uniformly. In order to do this effectively the researcher observed and worked with students three times in each class prior to the rating to become familiar with the children. As placing children on the Bandscales (and to a lesser extent the ESL Scales) is one of the duties of all junior teachers in the school, it was possible to engage in meaningful discussions with them when working with these documents.

3.3 Research Design

There are two studies in this research. The purpose of the first study is to test the effect of familiarity of a particular type of task on the way children negotiate meaning and provide (and use) negative feedback when conversing in dyads. The second concerns the effect familiarity with the content of a task has on the way children interact dyadically.

The sequence in which the tasks were completed is set out in Tables 2 and 3. The sequence was counter-balanced (using the ABBA technique in order to control for order effects) so that half the dyads completed the two way task first and half the one way task. The design of this study allows for appropriate comparisons of the data to be made with respect to familiarity, either of task type or content, on the way children interact - negotiating for meaning and providing and using negative feedback.

Research Design

The design for the two studies used in this research are illustrated in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

Study One: Task Familiarity

Task	Familiarity or Unfamiliarity with Task Type	Male Dyads	Female Dyads
First task 'The Farmyard' (Two way task)	Familiar with task.	Dyads 1-5	Dyads 11-15
	Unfamiliar with task.	Dyads 6-10	Dyads 16-20
Second Task 'The Park' (One way task)	Familiar with task.	Dyads 6-10	Dyads 16-20
	Unfamiliar with task.	Dyads 1-5	Dyads 11-15

Table 3

Study Two: Content Familiarity

Task	Familiarity or Unfamiliarity with the Content	Male Dyads	Female Dyads
Third task 'Assemble a Circus' (Two way task)	Familiar with Content of task.	Dyads 1-5	Dyads 11-15
	Unfamiliar with Content of task.	Dyads 6-10	Dyads 16-20
Fourth Task 'Secret Island' (One way task) *	Familiar with Content of task.	Dyads 6-10	Dyads 16-20
	Unfamiliar with Content of task.	Dyads 1-5	Dyads 11-15

3.4 Procedure

It was decided to conduct this study in the classroom where students did their daily work. As students were selected from four different classrooms, each of these classrooms became a venue for data collection. The classrooms involved were similar in that they were organised with a number of learning centres situated around the room. Students could access these throughout the day and at times work independently or in small groups. Therefore, it was not unusual for a teacher to work with a small number of children in one of these centres, while the rest of the class worked with a support teacher (or teacher aide) in another area of the classroom. Thus the layout of each classroom was conducive to the type of research work involved in this study. For the purpose of this research a small physical barrier was placed between the rest of the classroom and the place where the data was collected so other students were not tempted to interrupt, clearly overhear or view participants while they were working with the researcher.

Students were audio taped while they worked through the tasks. Students were accustomed to being recorded having regularly worked with such equipment during the year as part of regular class activities. Students sat at opposite sides of a desk facing each other with a 30 centimetre high screen in the middle of the desk to make it difficult for them to see each others' work, however they were still able to see each others' faces. The researcher sat at the side of the desk to supervise, observe and introduce the tasks. At the commencement instructions were read from an instruction sheet (see Appendix 3), and students were given 5 minutes silent planning time to gather their thoughts about how

they would approach their part of the task. No discussions took place during this time. Students were given 20 minutes to complete the task. At the end students were given the opportunity to share the results of their work (which amounted to approximately another 10 minutes), students knew of this opportunity before beginning the task.

It was made clear to students that while they were working through the tasks they could not ask the researcher to assist them in any way. If there was a total breakdown in communication and the students could not proceed the researcher was to inform students that they did not need to continue, however this never eventuated. When students found themselves in a difficult situation they all persevered with the task in their own way (although with varying success). Sometimes students left a problem aside and continued with another aspect of the task, only to come back to it at a later time. By leaving it to later the solution sometimes became evident to them. There were times when a misunderstanding resulted in lengthy negotiations in their endeavour to comprehend what was being said (again with varying success rates).

During the data collection period the researcher kept a diary to record information that was used to assist in the interpretation of the results of this research. This diary included information that was not evident from the transcripts alone. Information included items such as the amount of eye contact and hand gestures the students used, the students' level of confidence, their apparent anxiety or enthusiasm, and how assertively a particular negotiation strategy was employed. Information about whether a student was reluctant to negotiate or not was also included.

3.4.1 Tasks

Four tasks were used in this research (refer to Appendix 4 and 5). Two of the tasks were one way information gap “draw the picture” activities [Gass and Varonis, 1985]. One was called ‘The Park’, and the other was called ‘Secret Island’. In these activities students were required to describe a picture for their partners to draw. Partners were able to discuss and query any information given to them to help them make an exact copy of the picture. The other two tasks were two way information gap jigsaw activities. One was called “The Farmyard”, and the other was called “Assemble a Circus”. These tasks were similar to the jigsaw task used by Pica and Doughty [1988] in their research on classroom interaction. In these activities students had a copy of the same picture but with different parts in it missing, these parts were in position only on his or her partners’ picture. Students had to ask questions and request information from each other to place their missing parts correctly.

All tasks were prepared at similar levels of complexity. This was seen as necessary to allow for fair comparisons. The “ESL Framework of Stages Document” [McKay and Scarino, 1991] was used as a guide. Each task type was designed to have the following common features: an equal number of different objects that could be distinguished from each other; the reasoning demands for each task kept constant, and the degree of structure for each task type were to be as equal as possible.

3.4.2 Study One - Task Familiarity

Task familiarity in this research refers to knowledge and prior experience of the procedural aspects and the different roles participants can be engaged in to effectively complete a particular task type. Skehan [1996, p. 54] points out the importance of this by stating that it is intended to “ease the processing load that learners will encounter when actually doing a task.” At the time this research commenced all students who participated had no prior experience in working with the tasks similar to those used in this study.

Before collecting data, similar tasks were presented to the ‘task familiar dyads’ twice in the classroom, a week prior in order to make the task type familiar to them. Those students placed in the ‘unfamiliar dyads’ were asked to continue their lessons in another classroom during this time, so they could not ‘over-hear’ how to do the task, thus keeping them unfamiliar with the task type. As was done in the study by Plough and Gass [1993], at the end of the data collection period each student was asked whether they had ever done an activity of this type to make certain that the task felt familiar to the ‘familiar dyads’ and not familiar to the ‘unfamiliar dyads’. Their responses demonstrated that this was in fact the case (i.e., all familiar dyads said they had done similar tasks, and all unfamiliar pairs reported that they had not done so).

In this study the content of the task was equally familiar to both groups. The topics chosen (e.g., ‘The Park’, and ‘The Farmyard’) were based on the classroom themes

operating at the time, so both groups had been equally exposed to the content, but not the procedural aspects of the tasks.

3.4.3 Study two - Content Familiarity

Content familiarity in this research refers to knowledge of the “subject matter” or “discourse domain” inherent in the task. Skehan [1996, p. 53] points out the importance of content familiarity by stating that it aims to “teach, or mobilise, or make salient language which will be relevant to task performance.” The subject matter selected (e.g., ‘Assemble a Circus’, and ‘Secret Island’) were topics not covered in classroom programs in the last one and a half years (this was checked with the students’ current and previous teachers).

For those students placed in the ‘content familiar dyads’, the content of the task was made familiar to them. This was achieved by providing these students with three thirty-minute picture talks based on the topic of the tasks. In this way essential vocabulary and aspects of language inherent in the topic was covered a week before data collection. As in study one, students placed in the ‘content unfamiliar dyads’ were not in the classroom during these times. Before and at the end of each data collection period students were asked if they had ever studied the topic of each task in English to make certain that the content was actually familiar to the familiar dyads and not familiar to the unfamiliar dyads. This was seen as necessary, as some students placed in the unfamiliar dyads may have become familiar with the topic in English through experiences outside the school program. The responses from all the students placed in the familiar dyads confirmed that

the content was familiar to them, and the responses from all students placed in the unfamiliar dyads reported that they were not familiar with the content in English.

The aim of this study was to investigate what effect familiarity with the content of a task had on the way children negotiate, and provide and use negative feedback. Therefore, it was important that all students were familiar with each task type so the effects of 'content familiarity' as distinct from the effects of being unfamiliar with a task type could clearly be shown. The fact that this study followed the first was seen as important, as all participants had already had some experience in such tasks. In addition to this, all students were given the opportunity to work through similar exercises twice, for a period of at least two weeks prior to the data collection period. A record was kept of the dates in which each student had been presented with a particular task type in order to check that all students had equal opportunities to develop knowledge and experience in the procedural aspects of each task. Thus the variable of task type familiarity was controlled, leaving the content familiarity variable isolated in this second study.

3.5 Analysis

3.5.1 Transcripts

Transcriptions from the audio recordings were made as dyads completed all four tasks. Each transcription consisted of the first 100 utterances for each task. If dyads did not take 100 utterances to complete a task, then the transcription consisted of all utterances that were exchanged. Transcripts were exact representations of the spoken exchanges and included hesitations, overlaps, repetitions, echoes and intonation patterns. In this study an

utterance was defined as “a stream of speech with at least one of the following characteristics : (1) under one intonation contour, (2) bounded by pauses, and (3) consisting of a single semantic unit” [Crookes and Rulon, 1985, p. 10].

A trained assistant checked the accuracy of the content and utterance segmentation of 30% of all transcripts. Interrater reliability (calculated as percentage agreement) was 95.5%. All discrepancies between the researcher and the assistant were discussed and final decisions were then made together. Final decisions were then re-checked by classroom teachers who were more familiar with the children’s different accents and speech patterns.

3.5.2. Coding

The transcripts from all the tasks in each study were coded in two different ways. Firstly for negotiation of meaning, and secondly for patterns of interaction focussing on the provision and use of negative feedback.

3.5.2.1. Negotiation of Meaning

The data was analysed according to a subset of Long’s (1983) strategies used by adult learners when they negotiate for meaning. Oliver (1995a, 1998)¹ also used these strategies as the basis for her analysis showing primary school children can also negotiate for meaning. These strategies were:

1. Oliver’s (1998) subjects were aged 8-13 years old, and thus slightly older than the participants in this study, who were 7-8.6 years old at the time of the data collection.

Clarification Requests: These occur when one interlocutor does not entirely comprehend the meaning of another and therefore asks for clarification. They are utterances made by the listener to clarify what the speaker had just said in the preceding utterance. They include expressions such as : “I don’t understand”; “what do you mean ?”; “pardon”, e.g.,

A: Now draw some water for ducks.

B: What?

Confirmation Checks: These occur when one interlocutor believes he or she has understood but wants to make sure that they heard and interpreted the message correctly. Confirmation checks are utterances made by the listener immediately following a previous speaker’s utterance and are characterized by repetitions of all or part of that utterance. The characteristic which distinguishes confirmation checks from echoes, is intonation. An echo does not have rising intonation, whereas a confirmation check does, e.g.,

A: Draw a sun.

B: Sun?

Comprehension Checks: These occur when the speaker wants to be certain that the listener has understood. They can be any expression made by the speaker to check that the preceding utterance has been interpreted correctly, e.g.,

A: She is balancing on the horse.

A: You know- balancing ?

Self Repetitions: These include partial, exact and expanded repetitions made by the speakers own preceding utterance. They occur when the speaker repeats or paraphrases some or all of his or her own utterance to prevent or overcome a communication problem, e.g.,

A: two ducks on the grandstand.

A: two ducks on the grandstand. (exact)

A: I see on the grandstand.

A: The grandstand. (partial)

A: The sun up high.

A: The sun up high in the sky. (expanded)

Other Repetitions: These include exact, partial and expanded repetitions of the other speaker's preceding utterance in order to overcome a communication problem, e.g.,

A: There's a bridge across the river.

B: Yeh across the river. (partial)

A: Under the bridge.

B: Under the bridge. (exact)

A: She's holding her magic broom.

B: She's holding her magic broom stick in her hand. (expanded)

Thirty percent of all transcripts were scored a second time by a trained research assistant to ensure coding reliability. Interrater reliability (calculated as percentage agreement) was 94%.

Results were presented in percentage form by dividing the total number of a particular negotiation strategy (e.g., a clarification request) by the total number of utterances and multiplying by 100 for each dyad and for the entire sample of each study. Means and standard deviations were then calculated. To compare the overall effects that familiarity, gender and task type had on the way dyads negotiated for meaning a MANOVA procedure was performed. Then a series of *t* – tests were used to find if there were significant levels of differences for each particular negotiation strategy using a significance level of 0.05.

3.5.2.2 Negative Feedback

Conversational exchanges between interlocutors were coded according to a three part sequence of interaction to reflect the overall interactive nature of conversations [Oliver, 1995]. The three part sequence (which is a cyclical pattern) consists of the following:

- 1) a NNS initial turn.
- 2) a NS (in this study it was a NNS) response to the initial turn,² and
- 3) a NNS reaction to the response. The NNS's reaction becomes the initial turn for the following exchange, and is dependent upon the feedback provided in the previous turn.

The model as presented by Oliver [1995b, 2000] was an integral part of her analysis in investigating the existence and incorporation of negative evidence between NS's-NNS's. The same model (as shown in Figure 2) was adapted in this study, although used for NNS-NNS interactions.

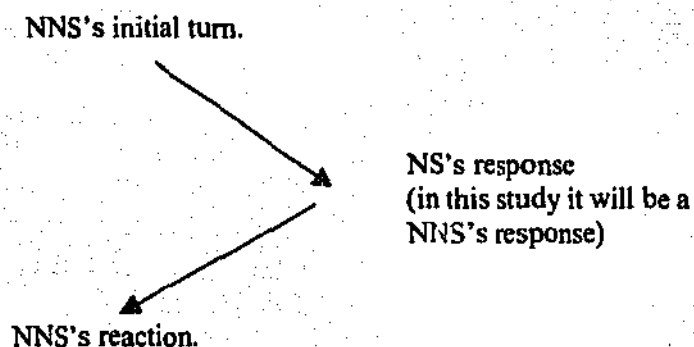


Figure 2. The three part conversational exchanges of this study.

2. The subjects in this study had completed 10-14 months of English instruction. They were all able to sustain a conversation, and therefore deemed proficient enough to respond to their partners initial turn.

Each part of the three part exchange was coded according to Oliver's [1995, 2000] analysis, these included:

1) Initial Turns: Utterances were rated as either targetlike, or nontargetlike (if ungrammatical or containing an obvious pronunciation error), or incomplete (if containing an ellipsis, or if it was deemed to be an interrupted attempt). At certain times a learner's turn consisted of more than one utterance, each of which could be coded differently. In these cases it was "necessary to assign a hierarchical value to the scores in the following manner: nontargetlike > incomplete > targetlike" [Oliver, 2000, p 130]. In other words, if there was a turn that contained a nontargetlike utterance, then the whole turn was coded as nontargetlike. Similarly, if a learner's incomplete utterance was in his or her turn, then the whole turn (if it did not have a nontargetlike utterance) was coded as incomplete.

2) Responses: Responses were analysed in relation to the preceding utterance. If the initial turn was nontargetlike then negative feedback could have been provided in the form of a recast or a negotiation strategy (sometimes an overlap occurred, such as when a recast was provided in the form of a confirmation check). Learners could have also ignored a nontargetlike turn and simply continued with their part of the conversation. If the initial utterance was correct or incomplete then negative feedback could not have been given as this type of feedback can only be provided in response to a nontargetlike utterance. In such cases the response was then coded as continue.

3) *Reactions*: If negative feedback was provided, students could have responded to this in two different ways. In the case of a recast by "incorporating this into their immediate production", or in the case of a negotiation strategy by "reformulating their production towards a more targetlike form"[Oliver, 2000, p.131]. In certain cases, because of the structure of the conversation, learners did not have a chance to respond to the feedback given, such as when the topic moved on after the feedback was provided. Therefore the learner did not have the opportunity to respond. Also there were other times when learners ignored the feedback that was provided to them. If negative feedback was not provided (because of targetlike turns inherent in the exchanges beforehand or, because of previously ignored nontargetlike production) then students just continued their part of the conversation.

4) *Pattern of Interaction*: Once each of the three parts of interaction were coded, then each interaction was assigned to one of the following six distinct patterns:

- 1) Targetlike -> continue³ -> continue.
- 2) Incomplete -> continue⁴ -> continue
- 3) Nontargetlike -> NF -> ignore
- 4) Nontargetlike -> NF -> use
- 5) Nontargetlike -> NF-> no chance
- 6) Nontargetlike -> ignore-> continue

3 and 4. It was possible for negotiation to occur at these times, however these negotiations were in response to misunderstandings only. They could not be classified as NF in response to nontargetlike form. Therefore they are not the concern of this current analysis.

Examples of each of these patterns are shown in Table 4 with data taken from the current study.

Oliver's [2000] coding scheme was useful in this study of negative feedback. The fact that it takes into account the provision of feedback moves in terms of nontargetlike utterances was of fundamental importance when analysing how familiarity of a task can effect the way children provide negative feedback. This is a methodological advance on some other studies into negative feedback (for example, Lyster, 1998), which compare frequencies of negative feedback but do not consider the number of times it was actually necessary to give feedback. It was also useful for analysing the extent NNS's were able to use negative feedback when there was an opportunity to do so.

A trained research assistant checked the coding of 30% of all transcripts for each of the three part sequence of interaction, and then the allocation pattern for each interaction.

Interrater reliability (calculated as percentage agreements) were:

- 1) Initial turns = 95%
- 2) Responses = 96%
- 3) Reaction = 98%
- 4) Pattern of Interaction = 96%

Table 4

Examples of Patterns of Interaction

Pattern of Interaction	Example
1. T-> C-> C	A Put the girl next to the pond B Near the pond, or far away? A Near the pond.
2. I-> C-> C	A Draw a tree on... B Big tree or a little tree? A A big tree on the left side.
3 NT-> NF-> ignore	A Draw a many bird up the sky. B Many birds in the sky? A Yeh, little ones.
4) NT-> NF-> use	A Next to fence is dog. B Next to the fence is a dog? A Yes, is a dog .
5) NT->NF-> no chance	A The magician is hold rabbit. B Oh! Holding the rabbit. I see birds too. Where can I put A On the roof.
6) NT-> ignore-> continue	A Draw water so boat in .. B Yeh, I draw now. A Draw a big boat.

To compare the effects that familiarity, gender and task type had on the overall pattern of interactions for each of the two studies a Hierarchical Log-Linear analysis was used. This analysis was selected as the most appropriate because of the nature of the data, which was based on the allocation of speaking turns into a number of different categories⁵. The Log Linear Analysis was useful for investigating the complex interactions arising from these categories. A chi-square procedure was then selected to compare each part of the exchange and the patterns of interaction for familiar and unfamiliar dyads. Again, this procedure was used because of the categorical nature of the data. A log linear analysis would not have been appropriate for these separate analyses because fewer categories were investigated at each stage, resulting in less complex interactions being investigated. A significance level of 0.05 was used.

5. The analysis for both negotiation of meaning and negative feedback follows the same procedures used by Oliver [1995a, 1995b, 1999, 2000]. The data for negotiation for meaning were calculated on a percentage scale, and the means and standard deviations were seen as appropriate measures of central tendency and dispersion. Thus, addressing the requirements for parametrical statistical procedures. The data for negative feedback were strictly categorical, and not based on any form of interval scale. Thus, addressing the necessary requirements for nonparametrical procedures.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Results for both studies are included in this chapter separately. First, study one focussing on task familiarity is presented, then study two focussing on content familiarity. Each study is divided into two parts, first the statistical analysis on negotiation of meaning is provided followed by an analysis on negative feedback.

The statistical analyses for both negotiation and negative feedback follow a similar format. First the variables gender, task type and familiarity are investigated for significant overall effects on the data, followed by an investigation for significant differences between familiar and unfamiliar dyads.

4.1 Study One – Task Familiarity

4.1.1 Negotiation of Meaning

Three independent variables were examined in this study: namely gender; task type (one way or two way); and familiarity. Each variable was investigated (using a MANOVA procedure) for significant differences. Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Negotiation of Meaning and Variable Differences

Variables	df	F	SIG
Gender	1	0.430	0.880
Task Type	1	0.542	0.771
Familiarity	1	8.595	0.000*

*P = < 0.05

Only the factor of familiarity resulted in a significant difference in the amount of negotiation of meaning produced by the NNS dyads: $F(1) = 8.595, p < 0.05$. Results for the other factors, gender and task type, do not show significant differences.

To investigate how familiarity with a task contributed to the significant difference, an examination of each conversational adjustment used in the negotiation process (such as clarification requests, confirmation checks and comprehension checks) and the use of repetitions were investigated. A series of t tests were performed. These results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Mean Percentage of Negotiation Strategies Used by Dyads Working Through Familiar and Unfamiliar Tasks

Negotiation Strategy	Familiar		Unfamiliar		(t)
	M	SD	M	SD	
Clarification	4.22	1.88	7.31	2.45	-4.46*
Confirmation	3.74	1.59	7.88	2.67	-5.94*
Comprehension	1.36	1.82	0.27	0.83	2.43*
Self rep	7.03	3.97	8.15	3.5	-0.94
Other rep	7.77	2.94	8.70	3.54	-0.079

* $p < 0.05$

Overall results suggest that the proportional use of each negotiation strategy differs according to how familiar – unfamiliar dyads are with the task. Results show that there is a significant difference in the amount of clarification requests [$t(38) = -4.46, p < 0.05$],

confirmation checks [$t(38) = -5.59, p < 0.05$] and comprehension checks [$t(38) = 2.43, p < 0.05$]. While more clarification requests and confirmation checks are used with unfamiliar tasks, more comprehension checks are used when the task is familiar. As a strategy for negotiating meaning, more repetitions are used than any other strategy in both familiar and unfamiliar tasks. Even though learners display more self and other repetitions while working with unfamiliar tasks, the results are not significantly different to those working in the familiar condition.

4.1.2 Negative Feedback

There are two forms of implicit negative feedback. Firstly, learners can be provided with feedback in the form of negotiation strategies, and secondly in the form of recasts. The following analysis of the data takes into account both these forms.

In this analysis of negative feedback it is important to initially reflect on the overall patterns of interactions that occurred between the dyads. This is done to clearly identify the most common pattern of exchange, and the proportion to which NF was possible, provided, and used in relation to all the exchanges. After this analysis the provision and use of negative feedback is analysed in more detail.

Table 7 shows the factors that had the most and least overall effect on the patterns of interaction made between familiar and unfamiliar dyads. The hierarchical log-linear analysis shows significant main effects for pattern: $\chi^2(5, n = 1,206) = 512.704, p < 0.05$, and for familiarity: $\chi^2(1, n = 1,206) = 3.947, p < 0.05$. A significant two-way interaction is also found between familiarity and pattern: $\chi^2(5, n = 1,206) = 85.37, p < 0.05$.

However the two-way interactions between familiarity and task type, and familiarity and gender are not significant. In addition, the three-way interactions between familiarity, task type and pattern, and familiarity, gender and pattern also are not significant. When the patterns of interactions are examined more closely, the variation in the results between familiar and unfamiliar dyads become more apparent.

Table 7

Hierarchical Log Linear Analysis Comparing the Effects
of Familiarity, Gender and Task Type on the Pattern of Interaction

Effect	df	x2
Familiar / unfamiliar	1	3.947*
Pattern	5	512.704*
Gender	1	0.310
Task type	1	0.604
Familiar x pattern	5	85.370*
Familiar x task type	1	0.064
Familiarity x gender	1	0.046
Familiar x task type x pattern	5	0.300
Familiar x gender x pattern	5	0.256

*p= < 0.05

Pattern of Interaction

In order to identify how and to what extent conversational exchanges are different between dyads working through familiar and unfamiliar tasks, the proportional use of each pattern of interaction needs to be identified.

Table 8

Pattern of Interaction for Dyads Working
Through Familiar and Unfamiliar Tasks

	Familiar Tasks	Unfamiliar Tasks
Pattern 1	31.2 ^a	21.8 ^a
Pattern 2	23.3	28.1
Pattern 3	3.44 ^a	13.2 ^a
Pattern 4	10.1 ^a	3.3 ^a
Pattern 5	2.0 ^a	6.5 ^a
Pattern 6	29.7	26.9

^aHaberman (1973) adjusted residual > 2

Overall there is a significant difference when comparing the patterns of interaction between familiar and unfamiliar dyads: $\chi^2 (5, n = 1,206) = 82.060, p < 0.05$. A post hoc examination of the results using Haberman (1973) adjusted residuals shows that this difference is due to the contribution of results (indicated by a superscript *a* in Table 8) for Pattern 1 (i.e., when exchanges in a conversation continued without any difficulty after an initial targetlike utterance; familiar: 31.3%; unfamiliar: 21.8%), Pattern 3 (i.e., when NF was provided and then ignored; familiar: 3.4%; unfamiliar: 13.2%), Pattern 4 (i.e., when NF was provided and then used; familiar: 10.1%; unfamiliar: 3.3%), and Pattern 5 (i.e., when there was no chance to respond to the NF that was provided; familiar: 2.0%; unfamiliar: 6.5%).

Each part contributing to the patterns of interaction are now considered in turn.

Initial Turns

Non native speakers produced targetlike, incomplete and nontargetlike initial utterances.

Nontargetlike utterances are the only initial utterances in which implicit negative feedback can occur. Therefore, it is important to examine the effect that familiarity with a task has on the initial utterances.

Table 9

Initial Turns for Dyads Working Through Familiar and Unfamiliar Tasks

	Familiar Tasks	Unfamiliar Tasks
Targetlike	31.3 ^a	21.8 ^a
Inccomplete	23.3	28.2
Nontargetlike	45.4	50.0

^aHaberman (1973) adjusted residuals > 2

Statistically there is a significant difference between the initial turns of familiar and unfamiliar dyads: $\chi^2(2, n = 1,206) = 14.457, p < 0.05$ (see Table 9). A post hoc examination of the results using Haberman (1973) adjusted residuals show that this difference is due to the higher number of correct utterances made by familiar dyads compared to the lower number made by unfamiliar dyads. This may explain the difference recorded for Pattern 1 in Table 8.

It is interesting to note that the number of nontargetlike initial turns between familiar and unfamiliar dyads is not significantly different. A relatively high number of these turns were recorded for both groups of dyads (familiar: 45.4%; unfamiliar: 50.0%).

Response Turns

After a nontargetlike initial turn, interlocutors can either provide negative feedback or ignore the incorrect form as they continue on with their role in the conversation. The extent to which the children provided feedback according to familiarity with a task is shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Response to Nontargetlike Turns by Dyads Working
Through Familiar and Unfamiliar Tasks

	Familiar Tasks	Unfamiliar Tasks
Negative feedback	32.5 ^a	46.1 ^a
Ignore	67.5 ^a	53.9 ^a

^aHaberman (1973) adjusted residuals > 2

The results show that familiarity with a task does have a significant effect on the way learners respond to nontargetlike initial utterances: $\chi^2(1, n = 574) = 8.090, p < 0.05$. An analysis of the adjusted residuals show that this difference is due to familiar dyads providing less negative feedback, and thus ignoring nontargetlike turns more than did the unfamiliar dyads.

Opportunity to use Feedback

In order to distinguish opportunities for learners to react to NF it is important to first determine when there was a chance for the learners to use the feedback provided. This information is presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Opportunity to Use Negative Feedback by Dyads
Working Through Familiar and Unfamiliar Tasks

	Familiar Tasks	Unfamiliar Tasks
Opportunity existed	87.0 ^a	71.8 ^a
No opportunity	13.0 ^a	28.2 ^a

^aHaberman (1973) adjusted residuals > 2

From the results it is apparent that there was abundant opportunity for learners to react to negative feedback. However, the extent of this opportunity is significantly different according to the factor of familiarity: $\chi^2 (1, n = 231) = 7.770 = p < 0.05$. The adjusted residuals show that this difference is due to the greater number of opportunities for familiar dyads to react to negative feedback, conversely there is less opportunity for learners in the unfamiliar context.

Learner Reaction Turns

Whilst the results show that learners have the opportunity to use the negative feedback that is provided to them in both contexts, the extent to which they do so seems to depend on how familiar they are with the procedural aspects of the task (see Table 12).

Table 12

Reaction to Negative Feedback by Dyads Working
Through Familiar and Unfamiliar Tasks

	Familiar Tasks	Unfamiliar Tasks
Use	74.7 ^a	20.2 ^a
Ignore	25.3 ^a	79.8 ^a

^aHaberman (1973) adjusted residuals > 2

Statistically there is a significant difference between familiar and unfamiliar dyads in their reaction to negative feedback: $\chi^2 (1, n = 181) = 53.959$ $p = < 0.05$. The adjusted residuals indicates the difference is due to familiar dyads being able to use a substantially high proportion of the NF (74.7%) compared to unfamiliar dyads (20.2%) – who show a higher percentage for ignoring the feedback. This explains the differences recorded for Patterns 3 and 4 in Table 8.

4.2 Study Two – Content Familiarity

The same analyses as reported in study one were performed on the data for both negotiation of meaning and negative feedback in this second study.

4.2.1 Negotiation of meaning

A MANOVA procedure was used to investigate the influence of the three factors - gender, task type and familiarity on the amount of negotiation of meaning NNS dyads made while working through tasks with familiar and unfamiliar content. These results are shown in Table 13.

Table 13
Negotiation of Meaning and Variable Differences

Factors	df	F	SIGN
Gender	1	0.068	0.896
Task type	1	0.425	0.828
Familiarity	1	12.05	0.00*

*P = < 0.05

Only one of the three factors, familiarity (in this case content familiarity), is significantly different: $F(1) = 12.05, p < 0.05$. Other factors, namely gender and task type, do not show significant differences. To investigate how familiarity with the content contributed to the significant difference, an analysis was undertaken of the strategies used in the negotiation process between familiar and unfamiliar dyads (see Table 14).

Table 14

Mean Percentage of Negotiation Strategies Used by Dyads Working Through Tasks with Familiar and Unfamiliar Content

Negotiation Strategy	Familiar		Unfamiliar		(t)
	M	SD	M	SD	
Clarification	4.48	2.05	9.12	3.39	-5.23*
Confirmation	3.83	1.88	8.18	3.49	-4.89*
Comprehension	1.76	1.83	0.46	1.34	2.56*
Self rep	5.49	2.69	8.40	3.11	-2.25*
Other rep	7.94	2.64	9.55	2.88	-1.83

* $p = < 0.05$

An examination of the means, including the results of a series of t tests for each of the five interactional features of negotiation, shows a number of significant differences between dyads working through tasks with familiar and unfamiliar content. Significant differences are found for clarification requests: $t(38) = -5.23, p < 0.05$, confirmation checks: $t(38) = -4.89, p < 0.05$ and self repetitions: $t(38) = -2.25, p < 0.05$. As can be seen in Table 14, more of these strategies are used when the content is unfamiliar. This is

in contrast to the significant difference found for comprehension checks: $t(38) 2.56, p < 0.05$, more of this type of strategy is used when the content is familiar.

4.2.2 Negative Feedback

This analysis identifies the effects of content familiarity on the provision and use of negative feedback. First, the factors that had a significant overall effect on the patterns of interaction are investigated, then a more detailed analysis of the interaction process is examined, with a special focus on the provision and use of negative feedback.

The hierarchical log linear analysis, which was used to compare the factors of familiarity, gender and task type on the patterns of interaction, show there are significant main effects for pattern: $\chi^2(5, n = 1219) = 606.04, p < 0.05$, and for familiarity: $\chi^2(1, n = 1219) = 11.61, p < 0.05$. Also there is a significant two way interaction between familiarity and pattern: $\chi^2(1, n = 1219) = 97.81, p < 0.05$. There are no significant three way interactions. This information is presented in Table 15.

Table 15

Hierarchical Log Linear Analysis Comparing the Effects of Familiarity, Gender and Task Type on the Patterns of Interaction

Effect	df	χ^2
Familiar / unfamiliar	1	11.616*
Pattern	5	606.049*
Gender	1	0.081
Task type	1	0.361
Familiar x pattern	5	97.811*
Familiar x task type	1	0.101
Familiarity x gender	1	0.039
Familiar x task type x pattern	5	0.228
Familiar x gender x pattern	5	0.111

* $p < 0.05$

When analysing how dyads performed according to each of the six patterns of interaction, variations in the results become more obvious.

Pattern of Interaction

An investigation into the effect familiarity has on the way learners interact is examined by comparing the proportion of the different patterns of interaction between familiar and unfamiliar dyads. This is shown in Table 16.

Table 16

Pattern of Interaction For Dyads Working Through Tasks with Familiar and Unfamiliar Content

	Familiar Content	Unfamiliar Content
Pattern 1	34.3 ^a	25.1 ^a
Pattern 2	21.8 ^a	30.0 ^a
Pattern 3	2.8 ^a	15.4 ^a
Pattern 4	11.3 ^a	3.2 ^a
Pattern 5	1.3	2.67
Pattern 6	28.3	23.63

^aHaberman (1973) adjusted residual > 2

A comparison of the patterns of interaction between the two groups of dyads shows a significant difference: $\chi^2 (5, n = 1,219) = 97.81, p < 0.05$. The adjusted residuals show that this difference is due to the contribution of results for Pattern 1 (i.e., after a targetlike initial turn the conversation continued without any difficulty: familiar dyads 34.3%; unfamiliar dyads 25.1%), Pattern 2 (i.e., after an interrupted initial turn the conversation continued without any difficulty: familiar dyads 21.8%; unfamiliar dyads 30.0%), Pattern 3 (i.e., when NF was ignored after it had been provided: familiar dyads 2.8%; unfamiliar

dyads 15.4%), as well as Pattern 4 (i.e., when NF was used after it had been provided: familiar dyads 11.3%; unfamiliar dyads 3.2%). Patterns 5 and 6 do not contribute to the significant difference.

Each part of the three part sequence of conversational exchanges between interactants is analysed in turn, below.

Initial Turns

NNS dyads working through tasks with familiar and unfamiliar content produce targetlike, incomplete and nontargetlike initial utterances. However, the results show that they produce these utterances in different proportions .

Table 17

Initial Turns For Dyads Working Through Tasks with Familiar and Unfamiliar Content

	Familiar Content	Unfamiliar Content
Targetlike	34.3 ^a	25.1 ^a
Incomplete	21.8 ^a	30.0 ^a
Nontargetlike	43.9	44.9

^aHaberman (1973) adjusted residuals > 2

Statistically there is a significant difference between the initial turns when familiar and unfamiliar dyads are compared: $\chi^2(2, n = 1,219) = 10.438, p < 0.05$, see Table 17. The adjusted residuals show that this difference is due to the higher number of correct and the lower number of incomplete initial turns for familiar dyads. This result explains the differences recorded between the two groups for Patterns 1 and 2 in Table 16.

For both groups of dyads there was a considerable proportion of nontargetlike initial utterances and percentages are similar for dyads working with familiar content (43.9%), and for dyads working with unfamiliar content (44.9%). Considering that negative feedback can only occur after a nontargetlike turn, these results show that the opportunities to provide this feedback for both groups are very similar.

Response Turns

The results once again suggest that NNSs are able to provide negative feedback to each other while working in pairs. However, the extent they are able to do this while working through tasks with familiar and unfamiliar content varies (see Table 18).

Table 18

Response to Nontargetlike Turns by Dyads Working Through Tasks with Familiar and Unfamiliar Content

	Familiar Content	Unfamiliar Content
Negative feedback	35.4 ^a	48.6 ^a
Ignore	64.6 ^a	51.4 ^a

^aHaberman (1973) adjusted residuals > 2

An examination of the responses to initial, nontargetlike learner turns shows there is a significant difference between the groups of dyads: $\chi^2 (1, n = 541) = 7.992, p < 0.05$.

From these results it would seem that negative feedback was more often provided and nontargetlike utterances ignored less when learners worked through tasks with unfamiliar content than with familiar content.

Opportunity to use Feedback

Oliver, (1995) points out that in order for learners to use NF there needs to be an appropriate opportunity for them to use it. The extent to which learners had a chance to use the feedback provided to them is shown in Table 19.

Table 19

Opportunity to Use Negative Feedback by Dyads Working Through Tasks With Familiar and Unfamiliar Content

	Familiar Content	Unfamiliar Content
Opportunity existed	91.3	88.0
No opportunity	8.7	12.0
<i>ns</i>		

Results for both familiar and unfamiliar dyads indicate that more than two thirds of the NF that was provided was followed with an appropriate chance for learners to react to it, and that statistically no significant differences are found between the two groups. That is, learners had the opportunity to use a substantial proportion of the NF provided to them.

Learner Reaction Turns

NNS can either use the negative feedback provided to them, or alternatively they can ignore the feedback. A comparison of the extent to which learners used or ignored the negative feedback shows that there is a significant difference between familiar and unfamiliar dyads : $\chi^2 (1, n = 198) = 77.475, p < 0.05$, see Table 20. The adjusted residuals show that this difference is due to the very high percentage for the familiar dyads using the feedback (80% compared to 17.5% for unfamiliar dyads), and for the high percentage

of unfamiliar dyads ignoring it (82.5% compared to 20% for familiar dyads). These results therefore account for the differences found in Patterns 3 and 4 in Table 16.

Table 20

Reaction to Negative Feedback by Dyads Working
Through Tasks with Familiar and Unfamiliar Content

	Familiar Content	Unfamiliar Content
use	80.0 ^a	17.5 ^a
Ignore	20.0 ^a	82.5 ^a

^aHaberman (1973) adjusted residuals > 2

4.3 Summary

Results indicate that familiarity with both task type and content does effect the way learners negotiate for meaning and provide negative feedback.

4.3.1. Study One – Task Familiarity

Unfamiliar dyads use more clarification and confirmation checks, and self and other repetitions when negotiating for meaning than familiar dyads, with significant differences found for clarification and confirmation checks. In contrast, familiar dyads use more comprehension checks than unfamiliar dyads, and this difference is also significant. Further, results show that learners are able to provide implicit negative feedback in response to a nontargetlike utterance. However, unfamiliar dyads provide more of this feedback than familiar dyads, yet familiar dyads are able to use a greater proportion of it when it is provided to them (these differences are also significant).

4.3.2 Study Two - Content Familiarity

The results for this study indicate that the quantity of negotiation increases when dyads are unfamiliar with the content of a task. These dyads used significantly more clarification and confirmation checks, and self repetitions. As in study one, a significant difference is also found for comprehension checks, with more of this strategy being used by dyads familiar with the content. Further, results show that both familiar and unfamiliar dyads are able to provide implicit negative feedback, although unfamiliar dyads do so to a greater extent. However, as in study one, a greater proportion of this feedback is used by familiar dyads.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

For there to be successful communication, learners must not only clearly comprehend the messages that are being exchanged, but they must also show interest and become active participants in the exchanges that are taking place. In this way conversation between participants is more likely to proceed smoothly (Gass and Varonis, 1985). However, "not all conversations proceed without interruption" [Gass and Varonis, 1985, p. 151]. Results from this study suggest that being unfamiliar with either the type of task or the content of a task has a significant effect on comprehension, resulting in the need for learners to negotiate for meaning. Furthermore, the results show that through the process of interaction, learners are also able to provide implicit negative feedback. That is, they can supply corrective information following a nontargetlike utterance. From this research it is apparent that a higher proportion of this is provided by dyads working either through unfamiliar tasks, or with unfamiliar content. These findings suggest that familiarity is an important consideration in the interactions that occur between NNS-NNS dyads, especially where children are concerned.

This chapter is organised in five parts. Part one addresses the research question posed for study one, and part two addresses the research question for study two. This is followed by part three, which is a general discussion about how the results seem to address the conditions that Pica [1994] points out are facilitative for second language acquisition. Implications for classroom pedagogy are addressed in the next section. Finally,

limitations of this study, and suggestions for further research with young NNS children in an ESL setting are outlined.

5.1 Study One – Task Familiarity

5.1.1 Negotiation of Meaning

A close examination of the transcripts shows that when the type of task is unfamiliar children need to first discuss and develop a common understanding of the procedural aspects of the task. In addition, children also need to share, receive and request information based on the content of the task to successfully achieve the intended outcome. The work involved in attending to these demands (even though the content is familiar) creates a situation in which a breakdown in communication is more likely to occur, requiring learners to negotiate for meaning. This may be a reason why the results show that children who were unfamiliar with a task negotiated more, producing more clarification and confirmation checks and self and other repetitions (with significant differences between familiar and unfamiliar groups recorded for clarification and confirmation checks), see example (1).

(1)

- NNS 1 You go first.
NNS 2 What I do?
NNS 1 What?
I don't know.
NNS 2 Well, I see this you have it the horses.
NNS 1 The horses?
NNS 2 Yeh
NNS 1 I give you it.
NNS 2 Now put on the picture.

NNS 1 What?
 I don't know.
 NNS 2 I think yeh.
 I tell you where it goes then you it on the picture the picture.
 NNS 1 The picture?
 NNS 2 Yeh
 Near the truck it goes.
 NNS 1 The truck?
 I put it near the truck?
 Now?
 NNS 2 Yeh see I tell you and you put it there.
 NNS 1 On the spot on the picture.
 NNS 2 Yeh

As shown in the above example, the children worked collaboratively together using a number of strategies as they negotiated a common understanding of how to work through the particular task. However, not all dyads worked in the same way. Some took longer, while others worked it out through trial and error.

It is possible that age has an effect on task performance. Children may lack experience and/or the required skills to carry out the roles required of them while working through the tasks that they have never done before. For example, for the information gap tasks used in this study, the extent children knew what information needed to be described, and the detail it needed to be given in order to successfully complete the tasks may have contributed to the results. Furthermore, there were times when children unfamiliar with a task needed to reassure themselves that they were doing what they were suppose to, in other words, that they were working through their particular role in a task correctly (this was usually done through a confirmation check), as shown in example 2.

(2)

NNS 1 Now draw some ducks in a pond.

NNS 2 Yeh.

NNS 1 Draw now.

NNS 2 Now?

All the time you tell me now what to draw?

NNS 1 Yeh I have the picture and you need to draw it.

No looking.

NNS 2 Oh, I draw ducks then all over here.

However, it also seems that age interacts with the effect of the context of the task. For example, children familiar with a task produced more comprehension checks than children unfamiliar with a task, and the difference was significant. It may be that familiarity with a task, especially having had prior experience in the hearer's role could have sensitized children to their partner's information requirements. This result seems to provide some support to what Anderson, Yule and Brown [1984, p. 24] predicted that "giving a child the opportunity to take the hearer's role in a communication task would help to overcome the 'egocentric' view of the young speaker and so result in subsequent better communicative performances." As a result children may have become conscious of needing to make sure that their own instructions were interpreted correctly, and the way they did this was through the use of comprehension checks, as shown in example 3.

(3)

NNS 1 Draw a tree big tree on the left.

You understand on the left?

You know the left?

NNS 2 Yep, the left.

This result shows similarities to the findings of adult studies in that if learners had prior experience in the hearer's role in a particular task, they became more sensitive to the kinds of potential problems that their partners could have experienced [Yule, Powers and MacDonald, 1992]. Thus results from this study highlight the interrelationship between factors such as age and task familiarity.

In addition, a qualitative analysis of the data shows that familiar dyads were able to express ideas and concepts more fluently than dyads unfamiliar with a particular task. It seems that learners familiar with a task were able to rely on language structures that they had previously acquired. These language structures were useful to the type of tasks being carried out in this study. In other words, because they had done similar tasks before, they knew how to successfully communicate particular concepts and ideas, as shown in example (4).

- (4)
- NNS 1 Where do I put the pigs?
NNS 2 In the fence.
NNS 1 Where do I put the boy?
NNS 2 Near the chickens.
Because he giving food to the chickens.
What about the truck?
Where does it go?
NNS 1 Oh yeh, on the hill.

In contrast, learners unfamiliar with a task did not have this knowledge, therefore they proceeded quite slowly. When commencing they paused more frequently and expressed uncertainty in what they were doing – especially through the use of hedges (e.g., the use

of phrases such as: maybe; could be; I think). Also, these learners showed a greater incidence of false starts and errors in lexis when instructing each other in what they had to do next. As a result the learners needed to negotiate in order to understand what their interlocutors were saying to them, as shown in example (5).

(5)

NNS 1 I pig have a pig?

You got it?

NNS 2 Yeh

NNS 1 Well what can I do

No where can I see – you see... ..

Oh it go where?

NNS 2 The pig?

NNS 1 Yeh

NNS 2 Could be...somewhere ...near the dog... maybe

NNS 1 What?

Further analysis of the data highlights another difference in the way children worked through familiar and unfamiliar tasks. The data shows that familiar dyads often provided a setting for the task by describing in some detail what the content of the task was about. For example, they provided a description of some of the pictures in each task before they gave instructions as to what they had to do to complete the task correctly, as shown in example (6). This setting provided a focus that assisted their partner to interpret and infer what was being talked about. In contrast, most of the unfamiliar dyads did not provide a clear setting. Therefore, at times exchanges were not interpreted accurately, creating a need to negotiate for meaning.

(6)

NNS 1 I have a farm.
And some farm animals.
The farm animals everywhere.
There some ducks in a pond.
The pond on the left side.
And a truck on the right.
Four ducks near the pond.
The ducks are talking.
The middle I see two horses together.
Ha! Ha! and pigs talking too much in the bottom.
Your turn.

5.1.2 Negative Feedback

From the results it can be seen that familiarity with a task also affects the pattern of interaction in a number of ways. In the case of learners who are unfamiliar with a task, it could be that the extra attention needed in trying to work out the procedural aspects of a task may have contributed to the higher number of incomplete and nontargetlike utterances recorded in the initial turns for these learners. Not only did these learners need to think simultaneously about what to say and how to say it, but they also needed to think carefully about what they had to do with the information when they got it. In contrast, learners familiar with a task were able to do this more easily. For this reason, familiarity seems to have assisted learners to allocate more attentional resources to the accuracy of their language.

Similar to the findings of Oliver [1995, 2000], the results indicate that child learners, whether familiar or unfamiliar with the task, were able to respond to the incorrect utterances produced by their partners with implicit negative feedback. However, the dyads unfamiliar with a task produced more negative feedback than did the dyads who

were familiar. It seems that while attempting a task they had never done before, learners needed to receive clear messages from their partners, especially when instructions were given about what they had to do next. If instructions were not expressed clearly (e.g., because of syntactical or lexical errors) a misunderstanding was more likely to occur. In attempting to develop a better understanding of what their partners were trying to say to them negative feedback was provided. This is shown in example (7).

(7)

NNS 1 Boy in mid

NNS 2 What?

NNS 1 Boy in mid

NNS 2 I don't know what you saying?

NNS 1 Draw a boy.

NNS 2 Yeh but where?

NNS 1 Not top not bottom.
but the in the mid.

NNS 2 In the mid?

Mid oh middle!

NNS 1 Yes, there he flying a kite

NNS 2 Oh what now?

Stop so I can draw.

NNS 1 A boy in the middle.

This clarity of reasoning seems to be particularly important for younger learners when they have a lot to think about – such as working out how to do a task, and at the same time keeping up with the demands of a conversation. In contrast, when learners are familiar with a task, they seem to have a greater capacity to be able to tolerate nontargetlike utterances, as they appear to have some awareness of what their partners are trying to say to them, as shown in example (8).

(8)

NNS 1 Draw a boy at the centrepont holding long one kite.

NNS 2 Yep a boy

Is the kite in the sky?

NNS 1 Yeh in the sky.

Both familiar and unfamiliar dyads usually had the opportunity to respond to the negative feedback that was provided to them. However, familiar dyads had more of an opportunity than unfamiliar dyads, and the difference was statistically significant. Again, it could be that the unfamiliar dyads were concerned about developing their own understandings in the procedural aspects of the task, and thus quickly moved the focus of the conversation to something else when the feedback was given. However, it is possible that this result was in fact due to some other sociolinguistic factor besides task familiarity. Therefore, this is an issue that requires further empirical testing.

With respect to use of negative feedback, the results show that when given the opportunity learners who were familiar with a task were able to respond to a substantial proportion of this feedback in the very next turn. It appears that they may have had the attentional resources to be able to notice and use this feedback when it was provided to them. In contrast, learners who were unfamiliar with a task were not able to respond to this feedback to the same degree. A probable reason is that the high processing demands while working through an unfamiliar task may have limited their ability to incorporate a substantial proportion of the negative feedback in the immediate turn. However, this does not mean that they were not able to make use of this feedback in the long term.

5.2 Study Two – Content Familiarity

5.2.1 Negotiation of Meaning

The results of this study are consistent with previous claims that content familiarity can account for differences in the way learners negotiate for meaning [Robinson, 2001]. The findings show that when the content is unfamiliar, children use significantly more clarification checks, confirmation checks, and self repetitions. The results for clarification and confirmation checks are similar to those found with adult learners [Robinson, 2001], and suggest that like adults, children also need to know the language associated with the subject matter (such as the ideas and concepts of the topic) in order to communicate effectively. If learners do not have this knowledge, then it seems likely that they will need to collaboratively work together to develop an understanding about the topic, as shown in example (9).

(9)

- NNS 1 Am there is
There is something like
NNS 2 What?
NNS 1 Like a where boats go.
NNS 2 Boats go?
NNS 1 Yeh in the water.
NNS 2 What you saying?
NNS 1 I don't know I forgot what how to say but
Boats can stay there in the water.
NNS 2 In the water?
NNS 1 Yeh for boats to stay there all the time.
NNS 2 Like a place like a jetty?
NNS 1 Yeh for boats.

Hence, the potential ambiguity resulting from being unfamiliar with the content seems to create a situation in which a communication breakdown is likely to occur, requiring learners to negotiate for meaning.

There were other times when learners who were unfamiliar with the content appeared to be rather conscious of their inability to express themselves clearly. As a result they were inclined to self-repeat a lot more using a variety of facial expressions and hand gestures. It seems that this strategy was used as a way of simplifying what they had to say, and was used to prevent further misunderstandings, as shown in example (10).

(10).

NNS 1 Put the girl standing the on horse.
On the horse.
Standing like this.
Standing standing like this
Standing so not fall down

Although comprehension checks were used by children when they negotiated for meaning in this study, the results show, as in study one, that the number were smaller than in similar adult studies [Long, 1983]. However, once again, familiar dyads used more of this strategy than unfamiliar dyads, and the difference was significantly different between the two groups. It could be that as a result of being familiar with the content (and with the task) learners were able to allocate more of their attentional resources towards monitoring the extent of their partners' comprehension of the information, as shown in example (11).

(11).

NNS 1 A girl on the string.
You know?

NNS 2 The trapeze artist.
On the right string?

NNS 1 Yeh.

With respect to other aspects of negotiation for meaning, a qualitative analysis of the transcripts shows that at certain times dyads who were unfamiliar with the content provided a number of lengthy descriptions of particular aspects of the topic. It seems that these dyads were unable to express the content precisely in English. In these situations, the lengthy descriptions were the cause of some form of confusion, resulting in a need to negotiate for meaning, as shown in example (12).

(12)

NNS 1 You have to draw like a long snake going its there going in a hole.
Well its going into the hole and then out.
Its got to be long like a snake going all around.

NNS 2 A snake ?

NNS 1 Yes but like where trains go on.

NNS 2 Train lines?

NNS 1 Yeh like that.

NNS 2 I draw train lines going in a hole in the ground?

NNS 1 Yeh

But it goes in a mountain and out on other side too.

NNS 2 Is train lines going through that mountain here.

NNS 1 Yeh, a mountain.

In contrast, dyads familiar with the content were better able to express exactly what they wanted to say. Conversations proceeded with more concise and correct terminology. However, the conversation between these dyads was at times elliptical and incomplete in

surface form. When this occurred learners were able to successfully rely on their background knowledge to interpret the intended meaning, reducing the need to negotiate for meaning, as shown in example (13).

(13)

NNS 1 Draw a train track going all around.

And through the mountain.

NNS 2 A tunnel

NNS 1 Yep.

Consequently, it seems that prior knowledge tends to make it easier for the listener to comprehend and infer what is being said. Thus, this study supports the notion that schemata plays a vital role in comprehension [Gass and Varonis, 1984; Long, 1989b; Labov and Fanshel, 1977], especially when children are involved.

Further analysis shows that being unfamiliar with the subject matter of a task seemed to affect performance in a number of other ways. For example, some learners often introduced an idea and then paused, showing they were finding it difficult to say what they wanted to in English. Then, after a pause some learners admitted they were having difficulty and continued, slowly explaining what they had to say in the best way they could. However, after having worked through a number of negotiation routines, some learners found it quite challenging to keep up with the demands of a task with unfamiliar content. At these times learners displayed the following coping strategies: they fulfilled the discourse obligations at the commencement of a negotiation 'routine' (i.e., they willingly provided a signal that they did not understand), but after a prolonged negotiated interaction they seemed to pretend, and act as if they had reached a full understanding of

what they were talking about. It may be that younger learners are unable to or do not have the maturity and patience to continue to negotiate for meaning at length. However, this feigning understanding has also been documented in adult studies and is one of the criticisms against negotiation for meaning given by Aston [1986].

5.2.2. Negative Feedback

The results of this study suggest that familiarity with content enables learners to better express their ideas. For those learners who were familiar with the content their choice of vocabulary and their ability to structure their language was more targetlike than those who were not familiar with the content. In addition, the nature of the nontargetlike utterances was different for the two groups: it was common to see familiar dyads making only a minor number of errors, while a multiple number were evident for learners unfamiliar with the content.

A qualitative examination of the transcripts suggest that familiarity with the content of a task may make it easier for learners to participate in a conversation. It seems learners who have knowledge of the topic have a greater capacity to predict what their partners are trying to say to them. They are able to follow the meaning of a conversation, even when their utterances may be less than targetlike, as is shown in example (14).

(14)

- NNS 1 Put the whip and man it with it near the lion that is sleeping.
NNS 2 Oh the lion tamer.
NNS 1 Yes the lion tamer.
NNS 2 What's under it?

Thus familiarity with the content enables learners to map out what is being said onto already existing knowledge structures, providing them the opportunity to interpret input in terms of what they already know. It also appears that they are able to use previous knowledge to build anticipatory scaffolding to help them infer how the topic of a conversation will progress. This may be the reason that information was interpreted quickly and correctly by the content familiar dyads. This could also be a possible explanation for the higher number of nontargetlike utterances being ignored by these learners. On the other hand, it did not seem that learners unfamiliar with the content could attain or predict meaning with such efficiency. These learners needed to negotiate and to provide negative feedback to each other in order to develop a better understanding of what was being said (this may be the reason why these learners provided significantly more negative feedback than learners familiar with the content). They seemed to hold information in a working memory 'buffer state', as they tried to develop an appropriate interpretation, see example (15).

(15)

NNS 1 See man with the string and coat black coat.

NNS 2 Let me see.

NNS 1 Put where there lion is.

NNS 2 What?

NNS 1 Put the man where is lion.

NNS 2 Which one?

NNS 1 He holding a string to hit a lion.

Put where is lion.

NNS 2 Holding a string?

NNS 1 Yeh.

NNS 2 Oh this man

Where the lion is?

NNS 1 Yes.

The finding that familiar dyads are able to use a significant proportion of the negative feedback provided to them (when given the opportunity) in the immediate turn compared to unfamiliar dyads has important implications. It seems that familiar dyads have a greater capacity to attend to the formal features of the language, especially when negative feedback is provided, because during this time the feedback is easily understood. Van Patten (1990) points out that learners have a limited capacity to consciously attend to both form and meaning, and that only when input is easily understood can learners attend to form as part of the intake process. It could be that learners unfamiliar with the content are not able to immediately incorporate the feedback to the same extent as familiar dyads because they are too busy thinking about what is being said (even though they may have been alerted to the feedback when it was provided). However, in order to substantiate this claim, further research needs to be implemented.

5.3 Conditions for SLA

Previous studies on 'negotiation for meaning' have demonstrated that negotiation provides the conditions that are seen essential and facilitative of second language acquisition [Pica, 1994]. These conditions include: comprehensible input, comprehensible output, and feedback. Although these appeared to occur when children were engaged in negotiated interaction, the amount varied according to familiarity with task and content.

5.3.1 Comprehensible Input

Results from both studies show that when the children engaged in task based learning (including both familiar and unfamiliar tasks) they were usually able to make input comprehensible. This finding is consistent with the results found by Oliver [1998, 2002]. However, learners who were unfamiliar with either the content or a particular type of task appeared to have to work harder to participate meaningfully in the conversation. The reason for this was that communication breakdowns occurred more often while children worked through these tasks compared to those in familiar tasks. As a consequence, there was a greater need to negotiate for meaning. Therefore, unfamiliar dyads used more clarification checks, confirmation checks, self and other repetitions. Long [1980, 1983] argues that these modifications provide learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input. As such, even though a task (or the content) was unfamiliar it still provided comprehensible input.

5.3.2 Comprehensible Output

There are many examples in the data where, through the negotiation process, children were given opportunities to adjust and expand their original utterances to make them more comprehensible. This has been described by Swain [1985] as comprehensible output. It would seem from the data that unfamiliar tasks provided more opportunities for learners to modify their output than familiar tasks. The unfamiliar dyads had to negotiate more often and therefore they had a greater opportunity to push out their language. This was less apparent in familiar dyads as their experience with the task type and content

meant that mutual understanding was attained with less difficulty. Therefore, it would seem that familiarity has an important role to play in providing opportunities for comprehensible output.

5.3.3. Feedback

As in previous studies [Oliver, 1995, 1998] the current findings show that children can and do alert each other about their attempts at the target language. In both studies, the results show that unfamiliar dyads produced more implicit negative feedback than familiar dyads, and a qualitative analysis of the transcripts shows that this feedback is provided through the use of both negotiated strategies and recasts. As in the studies by Oliver [1995] and Gass and Varonis [1985] negotiated strategies (evident in the transcripts of both familiar and unfamiliar dyads) usually occur when the meaning of a nontargetlike utterance is unclear or opaque. This is the reason why learners negotiated for meaning. In contrast, recasts (which are not as prevalent as negotiated strategies) are more evident in the transcripts of familiar dyads, and occur when the intended meaning of a nontargetlike utterance is quite predictable or transparent.

5.4 Classroom Pedagogy

Results show that children do negotiate for meaning and provide implicit negative feedback, especially while working through tasks that they are unfamiliar with, and appear to do so as a way to enhance their understanding. As this occurred in a classroom setting this does not support the claim made by Foster [1998, p. 1] that "negotiation for meaning is not a strategy that learners are predisposed to employ when they encounter

gaps in their understanding.” A qualitative analysis of the transcripts shows that there are many instances where children are able to alert each other to some of their errors as they negotiate towards message comprehensibility. Children are not only able to call attention to each others’ errors, but they do so without miscorrection. For these reasons it seems beneficial to give children the opportunity to work cooperatively together in the classroom.

It also seems reasonable to assume that the level of complexity of each task may have contributed to the above results. It seems that most children were able to meaningfully work through each task (with varying degrees of success), as the language and reasoning demands were prepared at a level appropriate to the age and proficiency level of the children. With the unfamiliar tasks, only one aspect was unfamiliar – either the type of task or the content. Although this would have raised the level of complexity, results show that most children were still able to cope with the demands of these tasks. Therefore, if tasks are to be of any use, they need to be prepared so that a balance is achieved between complexity and familiarity. If not, the task may become too difficult, children may then feign understanding and produce less than adequate performances; or if the task becomes too simple, they may not have the opportunity to stretch, test out and extend their interlanguage (or to receive feedback about their attempts).

As in the case of previous studies by Oliver [1998, 2002], the results of this study shows that gender does not influence the amount children negotiate for meaning, or their provision of negative feedback while working through familiar and unfamiliar tasks.

Also, a qualitative analysis of the transcripts for both studies show that both male and female dyads appeared to be equally confident to use both direct and indirect indicators to signal unacceptable input. Further, it would seem that both male and female dyads receive an equal number of opportunities to modify their interlanguage in ways that facilitate acquisition. For these reasons it does not seem necessary to organise children of this age on the basis of gender. However, this is a cautionary recommendation as whether this applies to mixed gender dyads still needs to be investigated.

Results from previous research have shown that both adolescent and adults tend to lose interest while working through tasks that they have done before [Plough and Gass, 1993]. In contrast, in this study it is apparent from observations made during the data collection that children are able to maintain a high level of interest while completing tasks that they were familiar with, as shown in example (16). In this transcript children are starting a two way jigsaw activity.

(16)

- NNS 1 It's great doing this.
I done before.
NNS 2 Yeh!
You properly do so I know how do it right.
NNS 1 Of course I will do it properly!
I'm very good!
This I know how to do it properly!
NNS 2 I do it properly too.
Now I start.
This is fun.

Evidence from the transcripts suggests that children were equally interested while completing the tasks in both studies, whether the content or task was familiar to them or not. It is possible that this was due to the topic that was selected for each task. It appears that the reason why familiar dyads did not negotiate as much as unfamiliar dyads was not because they were not interested, but because they did not have the need to do so. Therefore, when organising tasks for children to do in the classroom, what seems to be crucial is to consider the topics – choosing those that are intrinsically interesting so that children are active participants.

5.5 Limitations and Ideas for Future Research

According to Beck and Eubank [1991], Grimshaw and Pinker [1989] and Pinker [1989], in order to demonstrate that negative evidence is essential for L2 acquisition it is necessary to establish its universality in all L2 contexts. Research is therefore required to determine its presence and usefulness for all levels of proficiency, age, and in different classroom contexts. The children who participated in this study were of the same proficiency level (advanced level working in an ESL setting). Further investigations on how children of different proficiency levels (and in different contexts, e.g., in a EFL class) would interact according to familiarity with a task would need to take place to be able to generalise these findings to a wider population.

In addition, results of this study were based on only two types of tasks, a one way and a two way task. Therefore, further research exploring the extent to which similar results

would be attained by using other types of tasks would be necessary, thus having important implications for classroom pedagogy.

This study only examined the immediate use of NF after it was provided. Other studies have begun to investigate the effects of implicit negative feedback over a longer period [e.g., Mackey, 1999]. Results show some evidence of the long term effects and its importance in facilitating second language acquisition. Therefore, in keeping with this line of research it would be useful to explore the long term benefits of using familiar and unfamiliar tasks with children.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The results of this research confirm those of Long (1981) and Doughty and Pica (1986) that information gap activities provide the opportunities for conversational modifications to occur in task based interaction. In addition, it is clear that familiarity either with the type of task or with the content can have an effect on childrens' performance.

This study also provides clear support that familiarity impacts on the complexity of a task, and that this, in turn, may effect the relationship between interaction and comprehension. That is, the greater the task difficulty the greater the effect on negotiated interaction. Specifically the results show that children negotiate and provide implicit negative feedback more when the task is unfamiliar.

In addition, results from both studies also indicate that when a task is familiar, children have a greater capacity to attend to the form of their utterances. Therefore, they have a greater ability to notice negative feedback when it is provided. It also seems possible that learners familiar with a task are able to target this feedback to their partners' current level of interlanguage development. However, a great deal more research is required to confirm the extent this applies to children of different age groups working through different tasks in a variety of contexts.

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APPENDIX 1

Participants First Language Background

First Language	Number of Students	Percentage of Sample
Afgan	1	2.5
Arabic	3	7.5
Cantonese	3	7.5
Farsi	4	10.0
Indonesian	5	12.5
Bosnian	3	7.5
Serbian	4	10.0
Italian	1	2.5
Thai	4	10.0
Vietnamese	3	7.5
Russian	2	5.0
Polish	2	5.0
Mandarin	2	5.0
Romania	3	7.5

APPENDIX 2

Description of Levels – Speaking and Listening

<u>ESL BANDSCALES level 4.0</u> LISTENING – Level 4.	<u>ESL SCALES level 3.0</u> ORAL INTERACTION – Level 3.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Are able to comprehend social English in familiar contexts with ease, with some help given by the interlocutor. ❑ Are able to follow instructions within a classroom learning activity if explained and presented clearly, though will often rely on further repetition of instructions on a one to one basis. ❑ Require intense concentration to comprehend fully. May have a short concentration span if topic is unfamiliar. ❑ Needs time for processing of language experienced (e.g., before having to answer a question; during teacher talk, during class discussions). ❑ Will lack precision in understanding. ❑ Are restricted to a limited vocabulary. <p>SPEAKING – Level 4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Are able to communicate in a growing range of social and learning situations with an interlocutor and contextual support. ❑ Can sustain a conversation with an attentive adult on a familiar topic. ❑ Can give a short morning talk about a familiar item. ❑ Can answer questions about an item being studied. ❑ Extended discourse will be fragmented and approximations to standard forms will be evident. ❑ Will still need help from an interlocutor to process thoughts and express themselves in English. ❑ Language is fragmented as they search through their English resource to express thoughts in English and as they search for appropriate language to convey more precisely the English they intend. ❑ Will make frequent errors in syntax and expression as they test their hypotheses. ❑ Will use a small range of connectives. ❑ Vocabulary and concepts are widening, especially with curriculum related vocabulary ❑ Pronunciation in English is developing, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Students at level 3 communicate and learn through English in predictable social and learning situations, understanding contextualised English and expressing simple messages in basic English. They demonstrate awareness of aspects of spoken English necessary for communicating and learning at school. At this level students respond to controlled spoken English in familiar exchanges and manipulate learned structures and features to make original utterances, which are characterised by simplified language and varying grammatical accuracy. They engage in, elicit and practise English to extend their oral repertoire. ❑ Can follow a short sequence of instructions related to classroom activities. ❑ Is able to follow teacher explanation using familiar language. ❑ Able to negotiate simple transactions, e.g., borrowing a library book. ❑ Asks simple 'wh' questions. ❑ May over generalise grammatical rules, as in the formation of plurals and past tenses.

APPENDIX 3

Instruction Sheet

ONE WAY TASKS

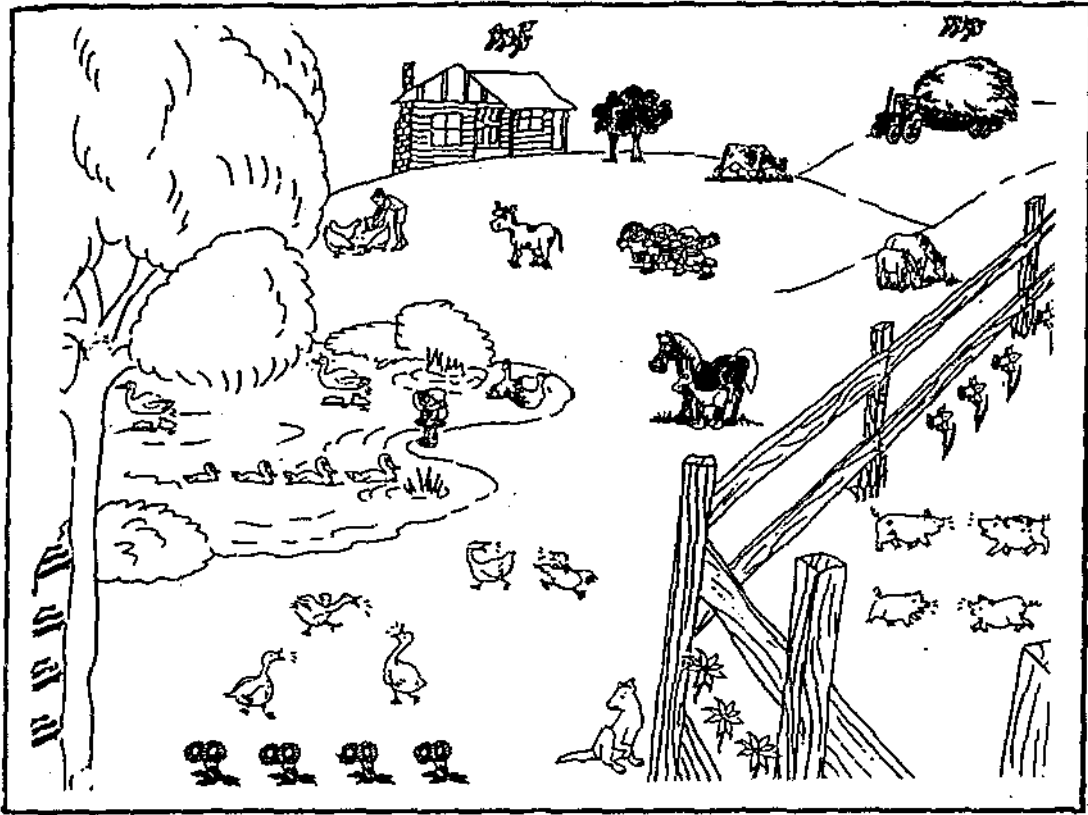
In this activity __x__ has a picture. __X__ is going to describe this picture to you so you can draw an exact copy. While doing this work you can both talk to one another. You must work together. I cannot help you. __X__, you will have 5 minutes to look at the picture and think about what you are going to say. Then you will both have 20 minutes to do this work, at the end you will have 10 minutes to share and check your work with your partner.

TWO WAY TASKS.

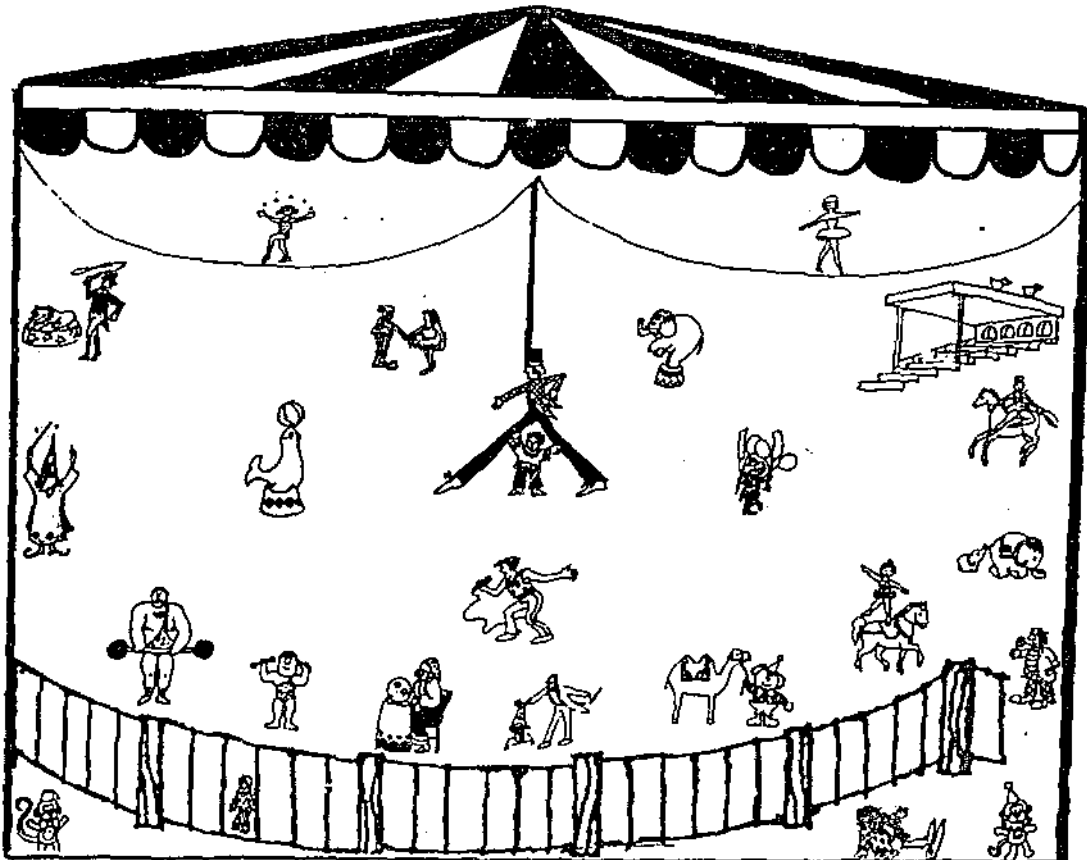
In this activity both you and your partner have a picture which is nearly the same. The reason why it is not exactly the same is because you both have missing parts to it. Your partners' picture has different parts missing to it. The missing parts of your picture are on yellow cards, which are in front of you. What you have to do is this: you have to talk and ask questions to one another so you can give your partner information on where to put the yellow cards. When you finish, both your pictures should be the same. You must work together. I cannot help you. You will have 5 minutes to look and think about what is in your picture. After you will have 20 minutes to do this work, then you will have 10 minutes to share your work with your partner.

Master Copies of Pictures Used in the Two Way Tasks

BASE PICTURES



The Farmyard

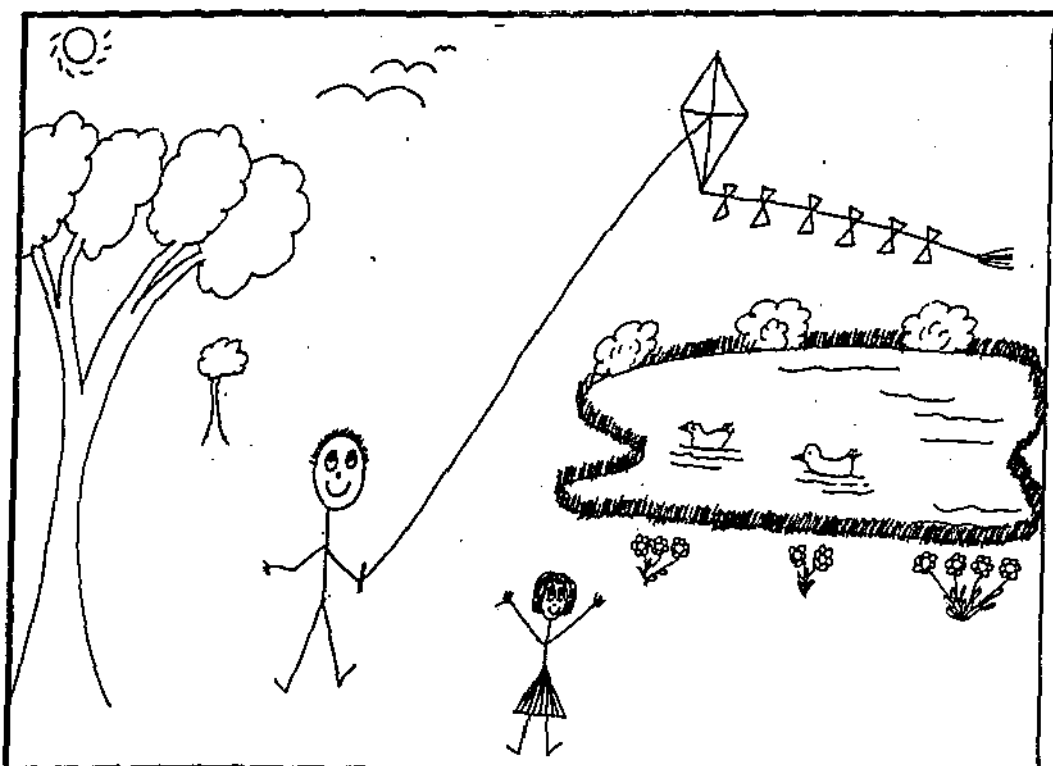


Assemble a Circus

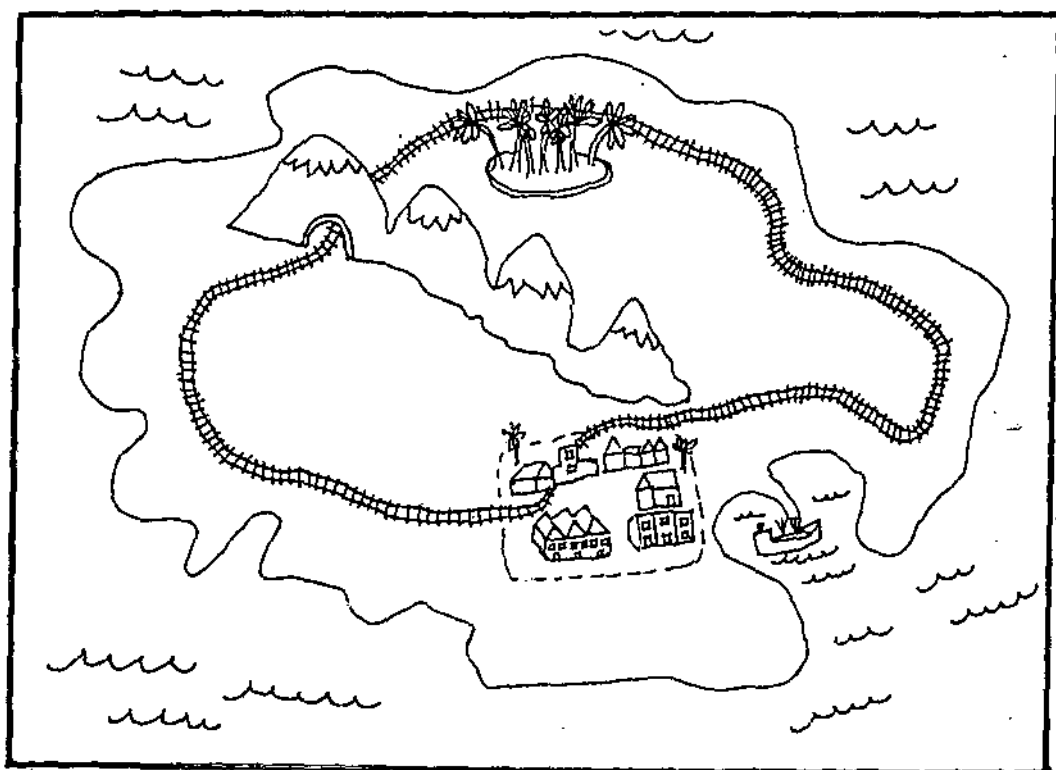
Students were given an enlarged A3 copy of each picture, however certain parts were missing. The pictures given to each participant were not identical, as different parts were missing from them. These were put onto separate cards and given to students in order to perform the two way task with their partner.

APPENDIX 5

Pictures Used for the One Way Tasks



The Park



Secret Island

Pictures were enlarged onto an A4 sheet. Students were required to describe each picture so their partners could draw an exact replication.

APPENDIX 6

Dear Parents/Guardians,

May, 2000

As part of the Masters of Education course at Edith Cowan University it is required for students to complete some form of research in their chosen field of study.

As a student in this course I have decided to begin a research project investigating how familiarity with the content and types of different tasks affects the way young ESL children interact.

I have just completed a special random selection process and your child _____ was selected to participate in this study.

If your child participates he/she will be required to complete a maximum of 4 different oral language tasks that will take 20 minutes to complete. Some of the tasks will have something similar to what children have done before; and the others will be slightly different. Children will work in pairs, and they will be tape-recorded while completing the tasks so that written transcripts can be made. In this way I will be able to make a detailed analysis of your child's oral language. Children will not be assigned a rating from their performance in these tasks, therefore comparisons between children will not be made. Participation in this study will not interrupt your child's normal daily work in the classroom, but rather add to the variety of activities already being offered.

I know that you are always interested to know how your child is performing at school. Class teachers are always willing to discuss your child's overall progress. You can do this by contacting teachers at the school to arrange an appropriate time for a meeting.

All records will be treated as strictly confidential during and after the duration of this study. Your child's name will be protected, and will not be mentioned in the analysis or write up of this research. This will be done by assigning a number to each child. In this way each child will be referred to by a number only.

If for any reason a child does not feel comfortable while completing an activity (e.g., some may become over anxious to do their very best etc), he/she will be given the opportunity to withdraw from that particular activity or from this research project. All tasks in this project will have a sense of fun about them.

Please discuss this project with your child, and if you are both happy to participate please sign the consent form below. As this project is voluntary, your decision will be respected. If you require further information, I will be happy to arrange a meeting at a time convenient to both of us.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this project with another person, you may contact Dr Rhonda Oliver on 93706276 at Edith Cowan University.

Thanking you
Mr. Kanganas, Room 3.
Phone : 93284201
May, 2000.

CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF RESEARCH: Familiarity of task and its effect on the way children negotiate for meaning and provide and use implicit negative feedback.

PLACE OF RESEARCH: Highgate Primary School.

I have been fully informed about this project by Mr Kanganas and give permission for my child to participate on the understanding that I may withdraw this permission at any time, and with the knowledge that in any published work resulting from this research my child will not be identified.

SIGN : _____

DATE : _____
