Exploring Transactional Competence through Task-Based Communication

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Abstract

At present, most research with regards to transactions is viewed through the lens of business. In English as a Foreign Language contexts, learning such skills may be left to courses like Business English or English for Specific Purposes. From a purely linguistic perspective, transactions are illocutionary acts that require perlocutionary responses. In this context, transactional competence is one's ability to give, negotiate, and respond to directives. This study primarily focuses on the qualitative methods and findings of a mixed methodology dissertation. It observes ten international university students and their ability to negotiate meaning to complete a closed task. Through a transactional assessment based on Yule's (1997) theory of referential communication, a discourse analysis of 200 minutes of transcribed transactions was used for content analysis to develop a model of transactional negotiation of meaning. As a result, the findings posit the relevance of strategic competence by analyzing the directive function of language, the language related episodes that arise, and the communication strategies that are used to deal with such miscommunications. The study concludes by highlighting the relevance of developing the transactional competence of international university students.

Keywords: Transactional Competence, Strategic Competence, Communication Strategies, Communicative Performance, Referential Communication, Language Related Episodes

Introduction

Transactional competence is an extension of interactional competence, which is in itself, a branch of communicative competence that has generally been defined by a mixture of organizational and pragmatic competence. When Kramsch (1986) first coined the term interactional competence, she was interested in the language needed by students to survive outside the classroom. According to Walsh (2012: 3), she had concerns because "interactional competence is context specific and concerned with

the ways in which interactants construct meaning together, as opposed to looking at features of individual performance which lie at the heart of communicative competence." This idea corresponds with the idea of "confluence," where two speakers create fluency together by the course of their interaction. For these interactions to achieve confluence, strategic competence also plays a significant role in regards to interactional strategies like turn-taking, topic management, signaling boundaries and so on (Young, 2013).

The study reported in this paper expands on the notion of interactional competence in that transactional task-based communication also requires a degree of confluence where meaning must be constructed together through strategic competence. The main difference being that interactional competence is more socially and pragmatically focused on context while transactional competence uses the context of the task to address the concerns of individual communicative performance. Therefore, the transactional function of language is essential because this is the language of doing, and as such, relies on illocutionary meaning. Such interactions require achieving the desired result which will depend on an even more significant understanding of one another and a higher degree of strategic competence.

The directive and informative functions of language are of the utmost importance because of the roles they play in task-based communication and the development of problem-solving skills that are becoming more necessary as English continues to dominate the world stage. As a result of such proliferation, there are a growing number of students who are studying in international universities by using English as an additional language. These students need to demonstrate confidence in giving directives and being able to negotiate meaning or express nonunderstanding in situations where the difference between understanding and misunderstanding could be vital to passing a course or performing other duties. The risk of miscommunication depends on the language proficiency of the interlocutors involved. Such hindrances, or Language Related Episodes (LREs), require specific strategies to be implemented to keep the doors of communication open. As such, this paper proposes a model of transactional negotiation of meaning for understanding how EFL learners perform tasks.

Objective

To develop a *Model of Transactional Negotiation of Meaning* that can be applied to a better understanding of task-based communication.

Research Question

How do language-related episodes and communication strategies determine the

patterns of transactional communication among EFL students?

Literature Review

Integral to the *Model of Transactional Negotiation of Meaning* being proposed, Brown and Yule (1996: 3) and Yule (1997: 12-13) were more interested in the transmission of "factual or propositional information" where "the receiver is expected to understand clearly what was in the message" thus "transactional language is message oriented." Therefore, transactional communication is more demanding than conversational or even interactional communication because not all communication strategies promote the performance of the transaction and some might actually impede it. For example, avoidance strategies are common to both conversational and interactional discourse but are a hindrance to performing transactional tasks because of the barriers to performance they create. In transactional communication and hence transactional competence, a clear understanding of giving and receiving directives while understanding such directives is imperative. Ellis (2003: 27) refers to this communication as the "transactional function, where language is used referentially to exchange information." This aspect of referential communication is discussed further in the section on LREs. For now, a closer examination of strategic competence is necessary.

Strategic Competence

The early decades of strategic competence research conceptualized two perspectives of Communication Strategies (CSs) considered to be either interactional or psycholinguistic. Tarone (1981: 49) provides an Interactional definition of CSs as "a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared." Within this interactional paradigm, Tarone (1980: 420) explains that "CSs are seen as tools used in the joint negotiation of meaning where both interlocutors are attempting to agree as to a communicative goal."

This explanation differs from the psycholinguistic perspective where CSs are used in two phases for speech production. The first step is planning which requires the speaker to determine what to say with regards to achieving their communication goals. After a plan has been contrived, the second phase, correct execution takes place. This execution requires the speaker to be able to convey the intended meaning and purpose of the plan. If there is a failure to communicate as a result of problems with the plan or execution, CSs may be called upon to try again by modifying the existing plan or starting anew. This is known as an *Achievement Strategy* where the

original goal is still sought. If a new plan cannot be conceived or executed, and the initial goal disregarded, this lack of attempt is considered an *Avoidance Strategy* (Faerch & Kasper, 1983). As a result, avoidance strategies are a hindrance to task-based communication while the following CSs have shown a preponderance for facilitating task completion.

Communication Strategies

Expressing Confirmation, EXC is a term coined by the author for the maintenance strategy which represents what Nakatani (2005: 81-82) describes as "providing active response and shadowing." For both the encoder and decoder, being involved in the interlocution are necessary, and this can be demonstrated by the responses given. Active responses are words or actions like "yes, ok, got it," that demonstrate engaged communication. Shadowing is where the listener repeats what was said showing that the details are correct and nothing has been missed. The following table represents the strategies provided by Dornyei and Scott (1997) that enhance transactional communication.

Table 1
Achievement Strategies (Dornyei & Scott, 1997: 188-192)

Communication Strategies	**Abbreviation**	**Usage**
Circumlocution	CIRC	To illustrate or describe the properties of the target object or action.
All-purpose Words	APW	Nonspecific word substitutes.
Mime	MIME	To describe concepts nonverbally or with a visual illustration.
Self-repair	SR	Self-initiated corrections in one's own speech.
Other-repair	OR	Correcting another speaker's speech.
Comprehension Check	CC	To check if the interlocutor is following.
Asking for Repetition	REP	To request repetition when not hearing or understanding something correctly.
Asking for Clarification	CLAR	To request an explanation of an unfamiliar meaning structure.
Communication Strategies	**Abbreviation**	**Usage**
Asking for Confirmation	CON	To request confirmation that one heard or understood something correctly.
Expressing Misunderstanding	EXM	To express that something was not correctly understood.
Verbal Strategy Markers	VSM	Phrases used "before or after a strategy to signal that the word or structure does not carry the intended meaning."

In transactional communication, the capacity to use CSs to give, comprehend, and negotiate directives is imperative. As a result, an understanding of what LREs affect the communicative performance of the participants of this study is necessary.

Language Related Episodes

Language Related Episodes (LREs) act as triggers in that they initiate the usage of CSs. Swain and Lapkin (1998: 326) as quoted in Mackey (2012: 133) define LREs as "instances of feedback, negotiating for meaning, questioning the meaning of a word or the correctness of a structure, as well as a request for assistance." Such triggers are not necessarily just one cause but rather a combination of factors, and as such, the LREs discussed herein are not an exhaustive account but are instead focused on the illocutionary act of directives as required in transactional competence.

Based on Levelt's (1989: 9-13) Psycholinguistic Model of Speech Production (Figure 1.), the author discerns LRE's that occur at one of the four stages of speech production by the encoder. At the Conceptualizer stage, the intention of the speech act is conceived by the mental act of "conceptualizing" where the information to be conveyed is selected based on its relevance, purpose, and what, if anything, that was said before. This preverbal information then moves onto the Formulator stage where the concepts of the previous stage are translated into "linguistic structure" through the "grammatical encoding" of the message. Based on these grammatical structures and the devised lexical form, "phonological encoding" commences by building a "phonetic or articulatory plan. Once articulation begins, internal speech becomes overt speech through "motor execution" which is then monitored by the "speech comprehension system" that makes for adjustments in the phonetic plan or re-conceptualize the grammatical encoding.

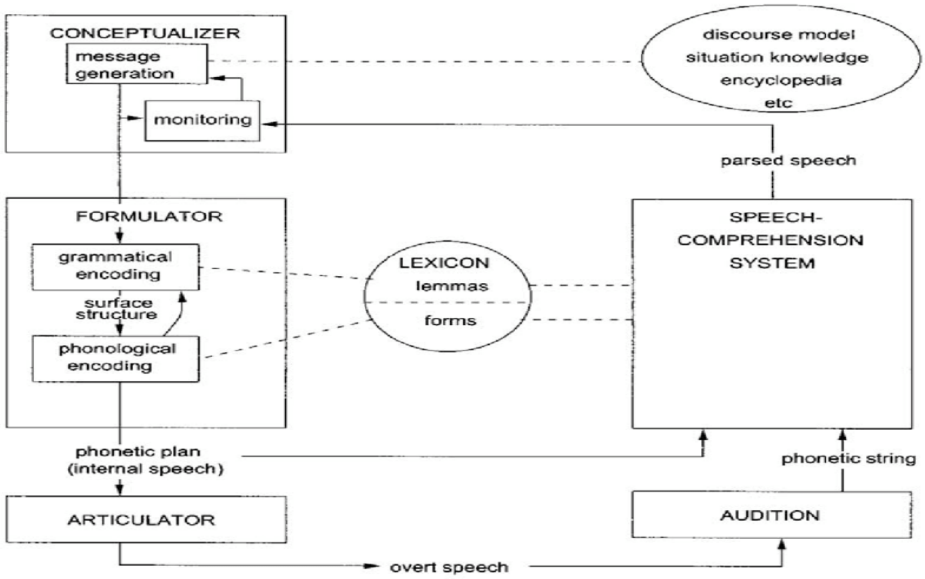

Figure 1. Levelt's (1989: 9) Model of Speech Production

Skehan (2009), re-examined complexity, accuracy, and fluency as measures of second language performance. He used Levelt's model to explain how "complexity, accuracy, and fluency, requires attention and working memory involvement, then committing attentional resources to one may have negative effects on other" (ibid: 511). In particular, Skehan's research was interested in the effects had on the *Conceptualizer* and *Formulator* stages of Levelt's model with regards to what both Skehan (2009) and Levelt (1989: 6) refer to as the "Lemma" or that which is "the non-phonological part of an item's lexical information… so, when we say that a speaker has retrieved a lemma, we mean that the speaker has acquired access to those aspects of a word's stored information that is relevant for the construction of the word's syntactic environment." When such access does not proceed smoothly, LREs occur where the *Formulator* is unable to retrieve a lemma from the pre-verbal message of the *Conceptualizer.* Skehan (2009: 519) reiterates how crucial this preverbal message is in its link to working memory and "attentional capacity" where it "is the basis for communication." That is "the consequence is that more attention is (or needs to be) available for ongoing performance, and so the performance linked dimensions attention which is more affected by the immediate, Formulator-linked attention, benefit."

The symbiotic relationship between Conceptualizer and Formulator is essential when analyzing the Psycholinguistic and Interactional CSs. Based on these strategies, the author was able to categorize particular LREs that help define what transactional competence is.

Referential (REF)

Referential aspects of communication rely on locative deictic expressions and the participants' ability to recognize each other's perspective and make inferences based on these perspectives while attending to and monitoring feedback. These perceptional aspects of "spatial dialogue" depend on the interlocutors' ability to establish "common ground" (Tenbrink, Andonova, Schole & Coventry, 2017: 318-319). This spatial dialogue cannot exist without what Yule (1997: 10) identifies as "a basic intention to identify" and "a recognition of this intention" by both the encoder and decoder. In Levelt's Model of Speech Production (Figure 1.), this deictic function of language begins in the Conceptualizer phase of speech production with the selection of referents to be used in the Formulator and Articulator phases. Therefore the referential LREs are triggered by the participants not identifying the same referential object, establishing a common referential orientation or discerning the directives within the referential location.

Pronunciation (PRO)

LREs referring to pronunciation are triggers based on how they affect intelligibility between the interlocutors and occur at the Formulator and Articulator phases. The problematic elements recognized by Swan and Smith (2001) to affect the communicative ability of second language speakers are:

- All the consonant phonemes and their clusters.
- Appropriate vowel length with short and long vowel contrasts.
- Prosodic features like nuclear stress and contrastive stress

Grammatical Knowledge / Code Complexity (GRAM)

LREs of this type occur during the Conceptualizer and Formulator phases. The Lemmas in Levelt's model require Grammatical Knowledge. This knowledge as defined by Bachman and Palmer (2010: 44-45), focusses on vocabulary and syntax for "producing and comprehending formally accurate utterances or sentences." At this point, any cross-linguistic influence may be referred to as transfer, but it is considered interference when it is deemed to have an adverse impact on production and understanding. Another factor that needs to be considered is the illocutionary directive function of language and the perlocutionary act of performing the directive. Basically, in the grammatical encoding of the Formulator phase, the encoder needs the Grammatical Knowledge necessary to produce comprehensible directives. If such directives are too complicated, an LRE may occur at the point of articulation. As a result, the decoder may also experience an LRE as a result. As such, Code Complexity is also directly related to Cognitive Complexity.

Cognitive Complexity of Processing (COG)

Cognitive issues arise from the working memory which Ahmadian (2015: 160-161), describes as "a flexible and capacity-limited cognitive system with domain-specific stores for the storage processing and manipulation of information." These "domain specific" issues may not just be an illocutionary factor in the act of giving directives as in the Conceptualizer and Formulator phases of Figure 1, but can also affect perlocutionary actions of the receiver. The cognitive complexity only increases when both the encoder and decoder are experiencing LREs. LREs of this type focus on task performance where the familiarity of the task can determine how much information needs processing. Such "cognitive familiarity" eases the demands of the "cognitive processing" needed to complete the task. When there is a lack "Clarity and Sufficiency" because inferences cannot be made, due to the poor syntax or pronunciation for example, then confusion or an LRE ensues (Skehan, 1998: 101). Another LRE that relates to this ability to process information is Communicative Stress.

Communicative Stress (STRESS)

Communicative stress is the result of "performance conditions" and the time pressure as perceived by the interlocutors. In this research, there is a time component of which must be managed by the participants as it may affect the "rate of speech, or opportunities to control the interaction" by the participants if time is running out or if one participant uses too much time. Timing also compounds with issues where the "type of response" may not meet the communicative needs of the receiver and result in a lack of tact or frustration (ibid: 101).

Combined LREs

LREs may not be isolated events and may have a combination of factors regarding the referential nature of task-based communication. Referential/Cognitive (REF/COG) LREs occur when there are signs of confusion regarding the clarity or sufficiency of the referential information. This confusion is usually the result of both interlocutors not sharing the same location or object of reference. Referential/Cognitive/Grammatical (REF/COG/GRAM) LREs are signs of confusion regarding the clarity or sufficiency of the referential information because of vocabulary or syntax causing both interlocutors not to share the same location or object of reference. Thus far, the CSs and LREs as a basis of this study have been defined. The next section explores the methodological rigor that was followed to garner an understanding of transactional competence and the resulting model.

Research Design

Theoretical Framework

The methodology herein was designed based on the constructivist belief that the participants needed to be actively involved in the process of meaning and knowledge construction to develop a working model for transactional negotiation of meaning. As a result, the participants are the makers of the meaning and knowledge necessary for cogent results. These results were captured through video and MP3 recordings as the dyads each performed four closed referential tasks. These recordings were then transcribed and analyzed through discourse analysis to acquire qualitative and quantitative data that was used to establish patterns of communication that were further analyzed to develop the model of transactional negotiation of meaning.

Participants

The participants in this research consisted of ten students from an International University's freshman's second level English course. From an IELTS perspective, these students would score in the 5.5 to 6 range or 525 to 550 in TOEFL. These students were most suitable because they had already completed the other foundation courses offered by the university and possessed a "functional" ability of spoken English. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that a variety of L1 nationalities were represented thus making for a more representative study. The final sample consisted of five Thais, two Burmese, one Vietnamese, and two Chinese participants. They were then divided into five dyads consisting of one Thai and one non-Thai to assure the use of English and promote diversity of accent, interaction, and comprehension.

Task Design

The tasks designed for this study are an adaptation of Yule's (1997) reference model combined with the research model of Shortreed (1993). Shortreed asked speakers to describe objects on a grid so that listeners could draw them onto an empty grid. Due to the task's complexity regarding "less shared reference" and "more descriptive detail," Shortreed's results found that there was a great deal of "repair strategies" like "requests for confirmation" and "clarification" used (Ellis, 2003: 94).

As in Figure 2, each participant was given 54 referent objects of different shapes and colors, a blank answer sheet, and one of ten tasks to give directives from. Each of the tasks consisted of the same ten components of varying complexity worth 10% each for a total of 100%. Components that were partially correct were given 5%, and completely incorrect components were given 0%. The three easiest components consisted of just one object of reference. This was followed by three components with

two objects, then two components of three objects, and then the two most difficult components consisted of four objects of reference. The rationale behind varying difficulty was to keep participants motivated while still keeping it challenging. As each participant was given a second task, they were also encouraged to surpass their first score.

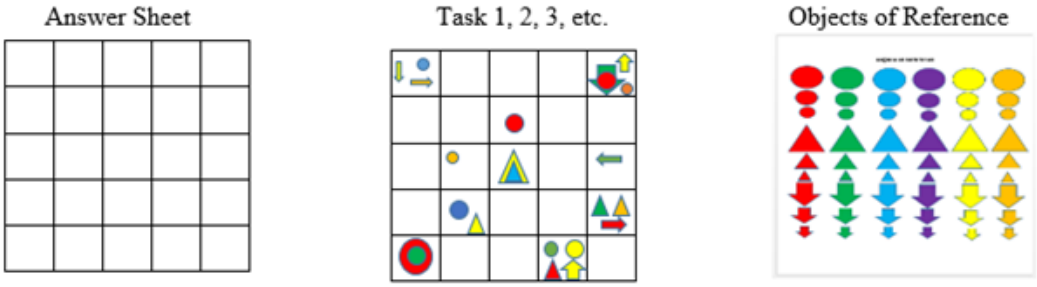

Figure 2. Task Materials

Data Collection

To collect the data, each of the five dyads had their interactions recorded with a video camera and an MP3 recorder. Each dyad was allocated a maximum of 20 minutes in total to complete two tasks, one for each participant. The aspect of time management played a crucial role in that it added to the urgency of performing the tasks promptly. The objective of the task was for both interlocutors to play the roles of encoder and decoder. The decoder had to complete the directives as given by their partner as quickly and as accurately as possible and vice versa. The participants were encouraged to use CSs when necessary and were encouraged to use other tactics such as facial expressions and hand gestures, but at no time were they allowed to look at each other's instructions or show each other the objects of reference. In Figure 3, student one used their task sheet to give directives to student two to place the objects of reference on their answer sheet in the same order as student one's task. This process continued until time ran out or both students had completed their answer sheets. The completed tasks were then evaluated for correct placement of the objects of reference by comparing the answers to the task sheets. This whole process was done two times using different tasks for a total of 40 minutes of video for each dyad.

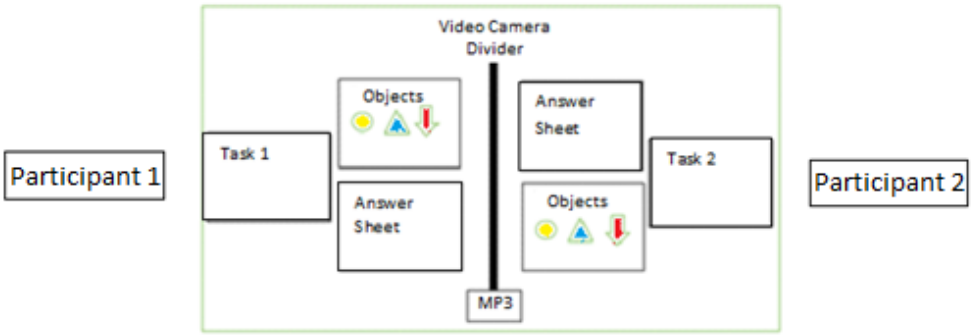

Figure 3. Task Layout

Data Analysis

Data analysis began by transcribing the 200 minutes of recorded information so that the author could conduct a discourse analysis to look for the LREs that caused repair sequences and the CSs that were used. This information allowed different dyads, and the interlocutors within those dyads, to be assessed for similarities and differences based on their communicative performance of the referential tasks. The sequential layout of the answer grid and transcription of the task performance allowed for the author to pinpoint precisely where the directives, or their reception, induced LREs and their repair sequences. Thus allowing for specific performance issues to be compared between dyads and their interlocutors. Through a discourse analysis of the transcriptions, the frequency of CSs as in Table 2, and the frequency of LREs as in Table 3 were tallied to make patterns of transactional communication more easily discerned when analyzed for success based on the results of Table 4.

Results

The following tables are only a fraction of a large amount of quantitative data that was gathered from over 100 pages of transcribed tasks. As a result, the quantitative data provided herein was used in the development of the model of transactional negotiation of meaning. To begin development, the initial patterns of communication were formulated through the frequency of CSs and LREs from Tables 2 and 3, and whether they lead to successful communication or not. The success of the communication was determined by examining the performance of each component that comprised the task scores in Table 4. Such a process also examined which strategies were used to enhance the clarity of directives. For example, this type of directive strategy use is demonstrated in the example transcription for Figure 5 where

{MIME} Miming, is used to add clarity to the initial directive. The frequency data was essential for discovering and understanding the communicative patterns of each dyad. From Table 1, it is evident that the EXC, Expressing Confirmation, vastly outnumbered the other strategies with it being used the most by Dyad 5, and the least by Dyad 1. Therefore, it could be assumed that different patterns were occurring between these two dyads.

Table 2

Frequency of Communication Strategy

CSs	CIRC	APW	MIME	SR	CC	VSM	OR	REP	CLAR	CON	EXC	EXM	TOTAL
Dyad 1	9	13	58	20	23	1	19	1	86	69	147	22	468
Dyad 2	4	4	106	52	29	10	30	5	134	70	353	15	810
Dyad 3	2	19	55	34	34	6	34	11	81	37	255	20	688
Dyad 4	2	3	43	64	49	3	18	7	49	87	339	11	675
Dyad 5	0	1	225	56	53	8	24	3	40	61	413	10	898
Total:	17	40	591	222	188	28	125	27	390	324	1507	78	3537

The CSs were also analyzed in response to the frequency LREs found in Table 2. Just as the patterns of CSs were explored with regards to their usage with each other, they were also analyzed in regards to the LREs that occurred. Through such discourse analysis, it was discerned whether the same patterns of communication were occurring within the same dyad with each different LRE and whether different dyads had developed different approaches to each component of the task.

Table 3

Frequency of LREs

LREs	REF	REF/COG	REF/COG/GRAM	PRO	COG	GRAM	STRESS	TOTAL
Dyad 1	41	181	46	0	19	8	34	329
Dyad 2	136	213	55	33	8	18	15	478
Dyad 3	135	165	60	12	20	23	39	454
Dyad 4	103	141	40	4	27	17	40	372
Dyad 5	80	279	45	8	21	8	71	512
Total:	495	979	246	57	95	74	199	2145

For example, REF/COG, Referential Cognitive issues were the most abundant issue that the participants had to deal with at a total of 979. By cross-referencing the number of occurrences with the strategies used, patterns of communication became apparent as in the case of Dyad 5 where they had the most REF/COG issues at 279 while using EXC the most at 413 and MIME at 225 and were able to score the highest average of 83.75 %. This information is especially relevant by allowing for successful communicative patterns to be compared to less successful ones. By doing so, the mistakes could be pinpointed based on the model of transactional negotiation of meaning.

Table 4

Task Scores

Score	Task 1 %	Task 2 %	Average %
Dyad 1	12.5	35	23.75
Dyad 2	40	80	60
Dyad 3	42.5	77.5	60
Dyad 4	40	85	62.5
Dyad 5	75	92.5	83.75

Transactional Negotiation

So far, this paper has explored transactional competence through the relationship between CSs and LREs by providing a methodology that facilitated the discourse analysis of the giving of directives and any negotiation of such directives that ensued. From such an analysis, the patterns of CSs and LREs were developed into a model of transactional communication as found in Figure 4.

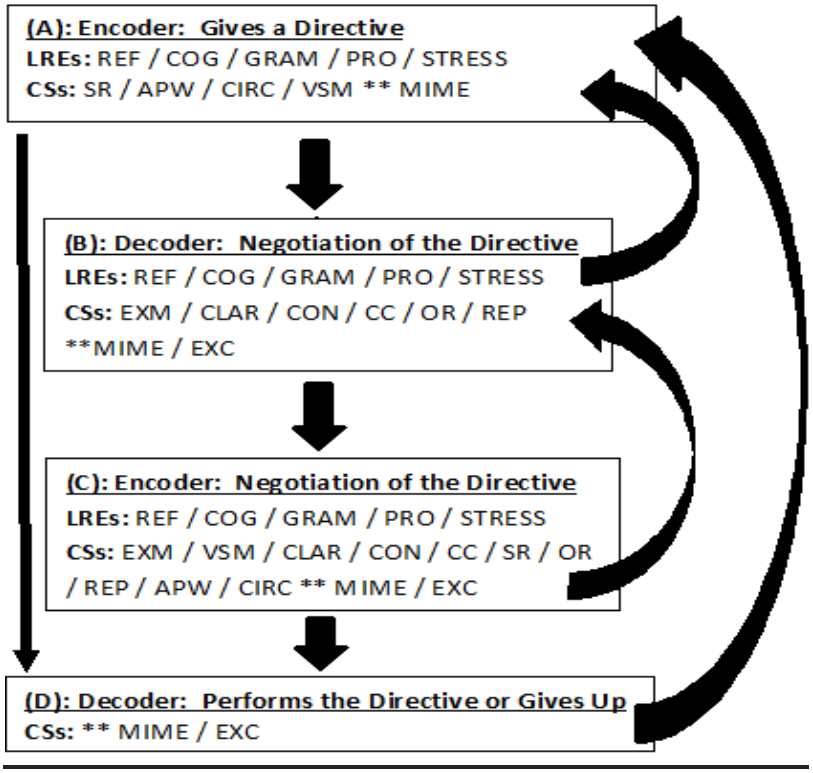

Figure 4. A Model of Transactional Negotiation of Meaning

Starting with box **(A)**, the encoder gives a directive to their partner who will need to decode the message to act on it. As part of the *Methodology,* this directive is based on *Referential Communication* where each participant will have access to the same objects of reference and understanding of what the task entails. Such a task means that nothing should be left to guesswork with regards to the components of the

closed task.

At this point, if the encoder does not encounter an LRE, then the directive will be given without incident and will proceed to **(D)**. If the encoder does have an LRE, it will be based on their ability to conceptualize and formulate a directive with regards to the perception of the task's complexity as in Levelt's (1989) Model of Speech Production. As a result, many factors contribute to the delivery of comprehensible directives such as acquiring the necessary "Lemma" that relates to the object of reference, its location, and the need for common orientation. An LRE based on these factors is considered Referential (REF). Some "Lemmas" may lead to directives that use overly complicated or incorrect syntax and vocabulary causing ambiguity and Grammatical (GRAM) LREs.

At the *Formulator* and *Articulator* stages, pronunciation may be an issue where a word or words cause intelligibility problems (PRO). Alternatively, maybe it is a cognitive issue (COG) in trying to recall items of reference from their working memory, or it may be a case of confusion of how to start whether it be the object or location or which should come first. Most likely, according to the statistics discussed early, it will be a combination of the factors (REF/COG/GRAM). The encoder may use a variety of strategies to address such instances of LREs that may occur at the directive stage such as Self-Repair, All-Purpose Words, or Circumlocution. Typically, these strategies will be combined with other strategies such as Verbal Strategy Markers and Mime.

Once the directive has been given and is received by the decoder, then one of two things will happen. If **(A) => (D)** happens, then the decoder was able to understand and perform the directive without any LREs. At this point, the decoder may use the CSs of Expressing Confirmation to demonstrate that the directive has been understood and completed. This expression of confirmation may also come in the form of a simple gesture (Mime) to demonstrate understanding of the directive. **(A) => (B)** occurs when the directive results in an LRE that affects the decoder. Such an LRE could be the result of a poorly formulated directive causing issues for the decoder, or it may not be the directive at all but rather the decoders own understanding of the directive. In such a case, it is the decoder which is having issues regarding the referential (REF), cognitive (COG) and grammatical (GRAM) aspects involved in the transaction. When **(B)** does occur, the decoder has problems and must resort to the use of CSs which will either lead back to **(A)** as in the case of Asking for Repetition or Expressing Misunderstanding where the process will begin again. Alternatively, the CSs used will lead to further negotiation of meaning by the encoder as in **(C)**. If there is a further negotiation, it may be the result of the decoder asking

for Confirmation, Clarification, or using a Comprehension Check. As a result, there may be back and forth negotiations of meaning **(C) => (B) => (C)** until confirmation of understanding is expressed and finally **(D)** is achieved.

A Model of Transactional Negotiation of Meaning in Use

The following transcription is an excerpt from one of the tasks used in this research. For this stanza, the correct referential location and referential objects were used by the decoder. The referential positions of some of the objects of reference caused LREs for both the encoder and the decoder. As a result, the actual answer was not entirely correct.

Correct Answer **Actual Answer (Correct Location)**

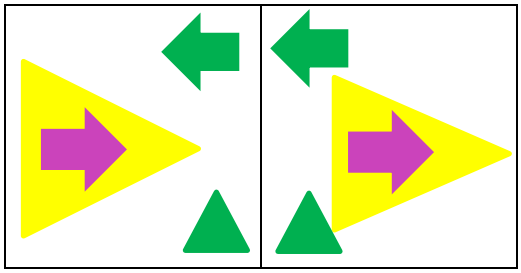

Figure 5. Example Answer

1. S1: and next to the row two at the second <ipa> strɛŋθ <ipa> **{MIME, gestures location}(REF/COG)**
2. S2: row two ↗ = **{CON/MIME, gestures location}(REF/COG)**
3. S1: =row two= **{MIME, gestures location}(REF/COG)**
4. S2: =across row two= **{CON/MIME, gestures location}(REF/COG)**
5. S1: =yes across row two and second= **{MIME, gestures location}(REF/COG)**
6. S2: =second ↗ = **{CON}(REF/COG)**
7. S1: = yes second <ipa> strɛŋθ <ipa> it's a triangle a yellow biggest triangle… this in… in <ipa> strɛŋθ <ipa> … and inside the triangle it have the arrow… purple arrow… the middle one **{EXC/SR/MIME, gestures position} (REF/COG/GRAM)**
8. S2: the middle one ↗ **{CON}(REF)**
9. S1: yeah… and the direction of the arrow is here <ipa> ə <ipa> is here this side **{SR/MIME, gestures position}(REF/COG)**
10. S2: the left ↗ = **{OR/CLAR}(REF/COG)**
11. S1: =yeah **{EXC}**
12. S2: =this way right= **{CC/MIME, gestures direction}(REF/COG)**

13. S1: =this is the right so yeah… outside the triangle have the arrow the middle arrow green arrow **{EXC/SR/MIME, gestures direction}(REF/COG)**
14. S2: middle green arrow **{EXC}**
15. S1: and the triangle green
16. S2: next to it do you mean **{CC/MIME, gestures position}(REF/COG)**
17. S1: <ipa> ə <ipa> next to… no no no… in this position yeah outside the triangle the biggest yellow triangle outside **{SR/MIME, gestures position}(REF/COG/GRAM)**
18. S2: the biggest yellow triangle ↗ = **{CON}(REF/GRAM)**
19. S1: =triangle= **{EXC}**
20. S2: =ok please leave it= **{EXM/MIME, gestures misunderstanding} (REF/COG/GRAM/STRESS)**

The complexity of the task is derived from the position and number of objects of reference and not the reference location. The progression of this task according to Figure 4 is line **1(A) => 2(B) => 3(C) => 4(B) => 5(C) => 6(D) => 7(A) => 8(B) => 9(C) => 10(B) => 11(C) => 12(D) => 13(A) => 14(B) => 15(C) => 16(B) => 17(C) => 18(B) => 19(C) => 20(D)**. Line 1 begins with a directive which is not clear in the transcription with the word <ipa> strɛŋθ <ipa>. Through the strategy of miming, S1 provides enough clarity where <ipa> strɛŋθ <ipa> does not appear to trigger an LRE with S2. This negotiation of referential location continues to take place until line **6(D).** S1 uses <ipa> strɛŋθ <ipa> again in the second directive **7(A)**, and again, it causes no LREs. If such pronunciation or vocabulary were to affect the performance of the directive, one would expect a response in the form of an LRE or CS, or both from the decoder.

The LREs in this stanza arise out of the referential positions of the objects for this task as communicative performance requires agreement between the interlocutors with regards to spatial awareness and the placement of the objects of reference. In this stanza, the communication strategy of miming occurs in 12 of the 21 turns. In lines 9 to 21, the strategy of miming actually contributes to the **(REF/COG)** LREs rather than alleviating them because of the confusion created with regards to left and right

In lines 13 to 20, both interlocutors can agree on the objects of reference with regards to shape, size, color, and directions they are pointing but the LRE regarding spatial orientation arises in line 13 and 17. In line 13, the directive "outside the triangle have the arrow" does not include a clear locative deictic. The word "outside" is ambiguous and was not clarified with the CS of miming. In lines, 14 and 15, they reach an agreement on the objects of reference, but in lines 16 and 17 unrepairable confusion ensues resulting in the task to be abandoned by line 20. This confusion all

relates to a lack of shared reference and its necessity for transactional competence.

Discussion

Transactional competence is an extension of interactional competence where transactional communication is a relatively unrecognized area of practical linguistics. Research in the field of interactional competence is primarily based on communicative competence and the necessity for strategic competence to navigate and facilitate interactions. As a result, there has been a shift from conversation to interaction, but there is still a question of whether interactional competence removes itself far enough from its dependence on pragmatic and socio-cultural competence as a backdrop for context. For example, in a study of college English education in China, Sun (2014), provides a clear example where the focus of interactional competence "is to develop students' ability to use English in an all-around way, especially in listening and speaking in their future work and social interactions." As a result, the study focusses on the teaching of CSs where "spoken English tests have been implemented either in a uni-directional approach or in the format of a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee." The study concludes that there is a necessity for the explicit instruction of CSs to improve interactional competence, but interview testing says nothing of the students' ability to communicate in ways that are conducive to problem-solving or performing specific tasks. Other studies like Theodorsdottir (2011), move further in the direction of tasks where the interaction is a service encounter "where language exchange is in fact needed for business transactions." Unfortunately, even this business transaction is more of a study of pragmatics and cultural interactions than the actual mechanisms of the transaction taking place. Through the *Model of Transactional Negotiation of Meaning* proposed by this study, further analysis could be applied to the studies above where transcribed data could be analyzed for the LREs that occurred and the CSs that would develop transactional competence. Such real-world contexts are of great value to EFL learners who are using English for specific purposes related to their occupation. In this regard, the model proposed in this study also provides a measure of transactional competence through evident discourse and content analysis that could use specific tasks for language teaching that relates to particular occupations like in Business English. Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001: 12) reiterate the utility of task-based communication by stating that "a task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, and with a connection to the real world, to attain an objective, and which will elicit data which can be used for measurement."

The measurements of this research are the occurrences of LREs and the

consequent CSs. All which have resulted in patterns of communication that answer the research question. The theoretical model proposed in this study makes it clear that there is a symbiotic relationship between competence and performance that continually evolves based on loops of continuous feedback starting with the directives of the transaction. It can be seen that the relationship between directives, LREs, and CSs becomes more complex as the task progresses based on each interlocutor's communicative performance. The model also demonstrates that the key types of LREs that occur are with regards to referential objects, location, and position. Such LREs tend to be cognitively demanding. By translating these cycles into different transactional patterns, the research has focused on the development of strategic competence among EFL learners in a way that improves cognitive processing like in Levelt's (1989) model. By making the transaction and its directives the point of reference, the author has shifted the focus from a pragmatic, socio-cultural exercise to a result-oriented performance that requires definite answers. As a result, this study sheds light on strategic competence in a transactional framework which exposes the shortcomings of the current view of interactional competence where transactions of definite outcome are considered just a small part of the whole rather than a separate competency.

Limitations and Recommendations

As a result of the tasks used, the controlled conditions of the tasks do limit this study. As such, the discourse focusses solely on the linguistic elements of the task and not socio-cultural aspects as one would expect to find in discussing communicative competence. Even though the focus on linguistic elements was believed as a necessity to develop the model of this research, it would be interesting for future research to apply this model in a natural setting such as in Theodorsdottir's (2011) study where natural transactions are taking place. Through such observations, the research might be able to discern some more of the different avenues in which LREs occur and CSs that are used.

Conclusion

This study represents some of the qualitative findings of a Ph.D. dissertation. It investigated the transactional competence of ten international EFL university students through the development of *A Model of Transactional Negotiation of Meaning*. It started with an exploration of the necessity for strategic competence based on the . of LREs and CSs. Through a methodology that used referential communication to examine simple to complex transactions, specific communicative deficiencies and the

patterns associated with them were identified. The indications suggest that that metacognitive skills with regards to processing information while giving and receiving directives are avenues for further development. As part of developing communicative competence, the transactional use of language is essential for students to be able to function in their courses and eventually in the workplace. The findings indicate that some students are capable of successfully using CSs to navigate unfamiliar situations even though their choice of strategies may be limited to what they are accustomed to using in their daily English communications. In this regard, future research should look at expanding the student's repertoire of strategies while making them more competent in transactional situations where the results are the difference between success and failure. As such, further research conducted into how specific CSs could be taught to students for use in task-based communication would be valuable to international universities. Through the model developed in this study, educators and researchers could also further explore ways to target the needed strategies for given contexts found in the workplace.

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