A Model of Transactional Negotiation of Meaning

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Abstract

Transactional competence as related to strategic competence, and ultimately communicative competence, is a rarely studied phenomenon regarding linguistics. Most literature on transactions focuses on the mechanics of business transactions and tends to gloss over what happens linguistically in such transactions. Therefore, as original research, this study posits *A Model of Transactional Negotiation of Meaning* that demonstrates the relevance of Strategic Competence within transactional communication. By analyzing the directive function of language within the context of Referential Communication, the model herein lays out the basis of discovery where miscommunication, as the result of Language Related Episodes (LREs), is addressed by Communication Strategies (CSs). Ten international university students demonstrated their Transactional Competence by navigating the completion of a closed task. The results demonstrated procedural breakdowns of the transactional process where achievement strategies such as asking for clarification or confirmation, interactional strategies, and maintenance strategies were needed to remediate problematic communication. It is believed that the transactional model herein is an excellent resource for discovering Language Related Episodes and the use of communication strategies

found in common miscommunications. The model demonstrates that LREs are primarily referential and that establishing common reference points is crucial to competent transactional communication.

Keywords: Strategic competence, Transactional competence, Language related episodes, Communication strategies, Directives

Introduction

One result of the prevalence of English as the world's leading lingua franca is that more students are studying through English as a medium of instruction at international universities. In such academic environments, students face the many challenges of situations where the difference between understanding and misunderstanding is vital to passing a course or performing the many other duties required in their scholastic lives. To be successful, these students who speak English as an additional language need to demonstrate their functional language aptitude by constantly and consistently negotiating the meaning of interactions while expressing nonunderstanding when necessary. How do our students deal with these forced transactions? What process are they going through, and what happens when difficulties arise?

On the surface, it seems evident that the risk of miscommunication primarily depends on the language skills of the interlocutors involved. However, functional language, such as giving and receiving directives, only compounds the difficulties experienced by students using an L2 as the immediate processing of meaning and understanding are required; alas, demanding situations for more LREs to occur. Additionally, each person is unique, and in L2 dialogues, they lack the shared linguistic resources common to communicating in their L1. The linguistic resources may diminish even further if speakers of different L1s share an L2 (Schepens, Slik, & Hout, 2015). Such hindrances to communication could be physical