*영어어문교육 16*권 **3**호 **2010**년 가을

Non-native/Non-native Interactions: Meaning Negotiation by EFL College Students*

Jae-Suk Suh
(Inha University)

Suh, Jae-Suk. (2009). Non-native/non-native interactions: Meaning negotiation by EFL college students. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 16*(3), 119-139.

The purpose of this paper was to examine various aspects of meaning negotiation process in online chatting. Korean college students were asked to engage in chatting on the Internet over the course of a semester-long period, and chatting transcripts were analyzed in terms of sources of communication breakdown, signals to indicate communication breakdown, strategies to overcome communication breakdown, and ways of closing meaning negotiation. According to the findings of the study, lack of background knowledge and incoherent string of sentences in text were two major barriers creating communication problems. Subjects were able to use signals to indicate their communication difficulties, and overcome them by using different strategies. In doing so, however, they were found to suffer a narrow range of signals and strategies, which showed their limited communicative ability in the management of interaction, and indicated a clear, strong need for an extension of discourse and strategic competences of Korean students for more effective and smoother transition of message in everyday interaction.

[meaning negotiation process/communication/chatting]

I. INTRODUCTION

Since its first appearance in the early 1980s, Krashen's (1982) Monitor Model, which is one of the influential and comprehensive theories of second language acquisition, has been criticized for various reasons (Omagio-Hadley, 2001). While most researchers (e.g., Gregg, 1984; McLaughlin, 1987; Munsell & Carr, 1981) complained about the difficulty of testing five hypotheses central to his theory empirically, others like Long (1985) and Van Lier

* This work was supported by INHA UNIVERSITY Research Grant.

(1988) expressed their concern over the causative relationship between 'comprehensible input' and language acquisition. In light of common observation that comprehension generally precedes production in language learning and use, Krashen's idea that only comprehensible input determines language development seems intuitively appealing (Diaz-Rico, 2004), but it is also obvious that such a comprehension-oriented position ignores the facilitative role of production in language acquisition, and shows a partial picture of language competence.

A growing dissatisfaction with Krashen's theory naturally led to the recognition of the importance of production in L2 development. Long (1983, 1985) and Swain (1985) were among the first to stress the positive effect of learner interaction on L2 learning. According to Long's Interaction Hypothesis, mere exposure to comprehensible input is not sufficient for successful L2 learning to take place, and process of how to make input comprehensible to learners is of primary importance. Long added that interaction is a right place for learners to ensure that input directed to them becomes comprehensible through various conversational devices. This suggests that input is modified and adjusted to the level of individual learners' L2 competence, and becomes understandable to them through their active participation in interaction. The process of making input comprehensible through such interactional modifications takes place when learners and interlocutors work together to overcome misunderstandings or fix communication breakdowns in their effort to attain a mutual communicative goal (Scarcella & Oxford, 1994). Since they both check constantly to see if their opinions, thoughts or intended meaning are transmitted in a clear, successful manner, a high occurrence of negotiation for meaning is common, which is conducive to the overall development of L2 skills. Like Long, Swain (1985) addressed the benefits of learner output in her Comprehensible Output Hypothesis. She held that when learners are forced to ensure that their output is comprehensible, they seem to raise awareness about specific formal features of L2 needed for production, and test previously generated hypotheses, which is all beneficial to the promotion of interlanguage development (Ellis, 1997). Perhaps, it was Vygotsky (1978) who saw interaction as an essential force in language learning. According to his Socio-cultural theory, language learning is basically a social process in which learners interact with others in social, cultural contexts, and go beyond their actual level of language competence to achieve potential development (Saville-Troike, 2006). In Vygotsky's view, learners in collaboration with more capable people get assistance in various forms, and are able to understand messages directed to them and to communicate, which leads to the expansion of their L2 ability.

Much of the research on the role of interaction in L2 development took a close look at conversation between non-native and native speakers or between non-native and non-native speakers in terms of interactional patterns, types of conversational modification, and frequency and accuracy of error correction. For instance, Gaies (1983), Hatch (1983), and

Long and Sato (1983) showed that speech directed to learners was modified by native speakers in various ways to make it comprehensible by using shorter utterances, less complex grammatical structures and simplified vocabulary. Also Long (1981) and Porter (1986) reported that native speakers tended to modify not only the speech addressed to learners, but also the shape of conversation by employing such devices as confirmation checks, clarification requests and repetitions so as to make it easier for learners to participate in and comprehend conversation. Similarly, Mackey (1999) who was interested in the effects of different communicative tasks on the learning of L2 question forms found that ESL learners with native speakers in group work received more modified input and used more advanced question forms than learners with no conversational interactions. On the other hand, studies on conversation between non-native and non-native speakers suggested that conversational interaction of non-native & non-native participants during group work did not differ from that of non-native & native participants in the overall quality of negotiation process. Pica and Doughty (1985), in a study comparing small group interaction with a teacher-fronted classroom on a decision-making task, found that small groups of ESL learners took more turns, and produced more individual output than a teacher-fronted classroom. Moreover, Varonis and Gass (1985) revealed that interactions between non-native and non-native speakers of ESL created more negotiation than interactions between native and non-native participants. Concerned with the relationship between type of interaction and negative feedback, Porter (1983, cited in Doughty & Pica, 1986) found no statistically significant difference between interaction of native & non-native speakers and interaction of non-native & non-native speakers of ESL in frequency of error correction. Likewise, Bruton and Samuda (1980) showed that ESL learners in small-group work rarely miscorrected errors made by other learners, and made frequent use of various strategies for error correction. Finally, McDonough (2004) conducted a study investigating the influence of interactional features on the learning of grammar in learner-learner interaction, and reported that EFL Thai students who used more modified output and error feedback were able to produce conditional clauses more accurately than students who made less frequent use of interactional features.

In sum, the fact that interaction plays a significant role in L2 development has been well represented in the L2 literature. However, despite a plethora of research, many studies tended to focus on either input modifications by native speakers in learner-native speaker interaction, or conversational interactions by learner-learner participants in ESL contexts with insufficient attention paid to negotiation work in EFL contexts. As a result, there have been relatively fewer studies to examine how learners in EFL learning situations talk to each other (Kim, 2008). In light of the fact that learners of EFL with little exposure to communicative interactions with native speakers get most input from non-native teachers, other learners, or textbooks in classroom settings, as shown from the aforementioned

studies on the importance of interactional modifications in the success of L2 learning, it is necessary to take an in-depth look at how learner input and output are modified, and become comprehensible during communicative exchanges in EFL contexts (Porter, 1986). That is, knowing in what ways and how well learners manage communicative interactions can become a useful pedagogical asset that leads to an easier, more effective teaching of communicative competence in EFL contexts (Porter, 1986). Particularly, for Korean learners of EFL who have long been used to teacher-fronted, grammar-based instruction, but in recent years are pushed to become proficient enough to use English meaningfully for communicative purposes, it is vital to have a full understanding of what goes on when they engage in interactive tasks as a basis on which they can learn how to best manage conversational interactions, and thus become communicatively competent L2 users. The present paper began along this line of inquiry, and its goal was to examine conversational modifications by Korean learners when they engaged in a communicative task. To be more specific, the paper looked into various aspects of negotiation for meaning particularly when learners had communication difficulties, and attempted to resolve such difficulties to keep their interaction going. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What are causes of communication breakdown when Korean learners are engaged in chatting on the Internet?
2. Which signals do Korean learners use to indicate communication breakdown occurring in chatting on the Internet?
3. Which strategies do Korean learners use to overcome communication breakdown in chatting on the Internet?
4. How well do Korean learners notice and resolve communication breakdown through meaning negotiation in chatting on the Internet?

II. PREVIOUS STUDIES

As compared to many studies on meaning negotiation between native and non-native speakers of English or between non-natives and non-natives in ESL settings, few studies are available to examine the process of meaning negotiation among Korean learners in both ESL and EFL settings. Shim (2007) made a comparison between computer-mediated interaction and face-to-face interaction in terms of meaning negotiation in ESL contexts. She found that students in computer-mediated interaction tended to initiate negotiation more often than they did in face-to-face interaction and that they relied mostly on signal named ‘local clarifications of unfamiliar lexical items’ to solve a problem of non-

understanding. Kim (2008) was also interested in looking into meaning negotiation process involving communication breakdown in ESL classroom. She video-taped group discussions among learners to determine major causes of communication breakdown. It was shown that 'lexical,' 'discourse' and 'non-hearing' were three main sources of problems of non-understanding, which was overcome successfully most of the time. Chu (2006) was among the first to examine interactions between non-natives and non-natives in EFL learning situations. She looked into the nature of interactional modifications between Korean learners and Japanese learners in chatting, and found that among various types of features used for meaning negotiation, 'content' and 'lexical items' were two major features conducive to the solution of communication problems. Meanwhile, Ko (2005) was concerned about the effect of meaning negotiation on the development of oral narrative skills, and conducted a study in which a comparison was made between an experimental group having meaning negotiation with a teacher as treatment and a control group receiving no such treatment. Unexpectedly, no statistically significant difference was found between two groups in the quality of oral narratives, which led to a discussion of various, possible reasons for the lack of effect of treatment on subjects' oral narrative skills.

III. METHODS

1. Participants

Sixty learners of English participated in the study. They were college students who were enrolled at one major university in the southern part of this country. At the time of the study, they took a course entitled 'Multimedia English' in which they learned about various uses of multimedia centering on computers in L2 learning, and had opportunities to apply what was learned for their learning of English in and out of classroom. They majored in English language & literature as sophomores or juniors, and about one third of them were male. Their self-rated English proficiency ranged from intermediate low to advanced level. Most subjects seemed to be highly motivated to use computers to learn English, and some of them appeared to be quite skillful in working with computers.

2. Instruments and Procedure

For data collection in the study, subjects were asked to do a semester-long assignment in which they engaged in chatting in English on the Internet throughout one semester in the year 2003. For this purpose, on the first day of class, each subject was instructed to choose his or her chatting partner among classmates, and interact with him or her by talking about

whatever topics they liked twice a week for fourteen weeks. As a way of collecting data on chatting conducted each week, individual pairs of subjects were told that they should print out what they chatted in English on the Internet, and turn it in during any of the classes in the following week. It was emphasized that each late submission would result in a serious cut in grade.

3. Data Analysis

As a result of chatting over the course of one semester, thirty transcripts of chatting were collected for analysis. As the focus of the study was on communication breakdown in interaction, the first step to analyze data was to spot and identify all communication breakdowns in chatting transcripts. For this purpose, communication breakdown was viewed as non-understanding or misunderstanding expressed by any linguistic forms showing the difficulty of getting messages across between interlocutors during chatting. All the identified communication breakdowns were further analyzed in four different ways. That is, to find out sources of communication breakdown (i.e., research question 1), based on Kim's (2008) coding scheme, they were categorized in terms of five types of sources of communication breakdown: 'lexical,' 'grammar,' 'discourse,' 'background knowledge,' and 'mechanics.' Next, to see signals to indicate communication breakdown (i.e., research question 2), following Shim's (2007) coding scheme, data were analyzed in terms of four kinds of signals: 'global clarification,' 'local clarification,' 'local confirmation,' and 'appeal for help' (See the Appendix for definitions with examples in Kim's and Shim's coding schemes). Further, to find strategies used by subjects to get over communication breakdown (i.e., research question 3), following Brown's (2007) list of communication strategies along with Chu's (2006) coding scheme, data were analyzed accordingly. Finally, to determine whether a given communication breakdown was noticed and resolved successfully (i.e., research question 4), based on Kim (2008), data were analyzed in terms of three types of meaning negotiation processes: 'notice and successful meaning negotiation,' 'notice but unsuccessful meaning negotiation,' and 'un-notice and no meaning negotiation.'

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Sources of Communication Breakdown

The analysis of thirty transcripts of chatting done over the course of a semester-long period revealed that causes of communication breakdown in chatting varied, and spread

across five types of sources such as lexical, grammar, discourse, background knowledge and mechanics as Table 1 showed below.

TABLE 1
Types of Sources of Communication Breakdown in Chatting

Types of sources of CB	Frequency	% of total sources of CB
Lexical	8	14
Grammar	6	11
Discourse	23	41
Background Knowledge	18	32
Mechanics	1	2
Total	56	100

Cf: CB = Communication Breakdown

Among five types of sources of communication breakdown, discourse and background knowledge were two main causes that created more than 70% of a total number of communication breakdown during chatting. Concerning a type of source of discourse, subjects showed their limited discourse ability in getting their messages across since they were not able to interconnect sentences in a coherent, cooperative manner. They tended to talk most of the time from speaker-oriented perspective with little consideration on hearer, and as a result, hearer had hard time catching an accurate understanding of what was said as the following example taken from data shows:

S1: I went to school on Saturday.
S2: What did you do?
S1: My high school teacher looks older than past. So I was a little depressing. We went to restaurant for lunch. Teacher bought it. I had great time.
S2: Really? Wow~ You had a great time.
S1: Yes. And I realized that we always thank teacher!
S2: Well, your teacher also thanks you.
S1: Really?? Well, I don't know.
S2: because you were a good student and do your best in college now.
S1: Thank you for your compliment. But I'm not a good student.

S1 in this example talked about seeing her high school teacher, and S2 seemed to show much interest in S1's topic. But a smooth management of dialogue stopped when S2 responded abruptly by saying "Well, your teacher also thanks you." Since this sentence created a signal "I don't know," it must have been unclear or obscure to S1, and thus resulted in non-understanding. As one possible explanation, S2 paid little attention to make conversation reciprocal, and was negligent about his contribution to mutual, cooperative conversational exchange (Grice, 1975). Needless to say, non-understanding in S1 resulted

from the violation of a cooperative principle of conversation put forward by Grice (1975) which is one crucial aspect of communicative competence.

Background knowledge was the second most frequently occurring type of source creating non-understanding or misunderstanding which accounted for 32% of a total frequency of communication breakdown in chatting. Subjects here pushed their talk with little background knowledge shared between interlocutors or unfamiliarity with a certain object or concept to the other chatting partner as seen in the following conversation.

S3: Travel makes our mind broaden.
S4: Right! Paris is very beautiful city. Notre-dame, Seine, Rouvre museum. There are thirty four bridges.
S3: France is a historically good, beautiful country.
S4: The famous bridge is pong-neuf.
S3: pong-neuf???
S4: Do you know "Lovers of pong-neuf" Cinema?
S3: Yes, I heard about it. But I didn't see the movie.

S3 initiated a topic about 'travel' excited by S4, but was soon faced with an unknown word 'pong-neuf' given by S4. It is likely that both interlocutors did not share sufficient background knowledge about French bridges, which led to a temporary communication breakdown.

On the other hand, lexical and grammatical sources were not major barriers causing communication problems in chatting, and constituted only 25% of a total frequency of communication breakdown. This indicates that linguistic knowledge of vocabulary and grammar played a partial role in creating communication breakdown as compared to the previously mentioned sources of communication breakdown such as discourse and background knowledge.

S5: Now I'm very nervous.
S6: Why? What's wrong with you?
S5: I can't manage English so fluently.
S6: What you mean "fluently"?
S5: fluent … sorry.
S6: Ah… Me too. How can you do English well?
S5: Your major is education right?

In the above example, though S5 made wrong choices of words, 'manage' and 'fluently,' they were not serious barriers to the maintenance of conversation. Right after S5's self-correction, S6 gave an immediate response of his understanding, which indicated that communication breakdown here was fixed easily and rapidly. It seems that despite a

presence of a non-target word, ‘manage,’ it had little negative effect on getting massage across because S6 herself replaced it with another word ‘do’ in a new sentence as part of her effort to process it correctly, and S5 did not show any further signal of non-understanding of S6’s replacement in his last turn-taking.

2. Signals Used to Indicate Communication Breakdown

The results of an analysis of signals used to indicate communication breakdown revealed that subjects relied mostly on four kinds of signals to let chatting partners recognize their communication difficulties as shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2

Kinds of Signals Used to Indicate Communication Breakdown in Chatting

Kinds of signals	Frequency	% of total CB
A. Global Clarification		
1. Explicit Statement of non-understanding	6	11
2. Indication of global non-understanding	23	42
3. Request for further explanation	9	16
Sub-total	38	69
B. Local Clarification		
1. Repetition	3	5
2. Request for further explanation	4	7
3. Request for meaning of a specific lexical item	2	4
Sub-total	9	16
C. Local Confirmation		
1. Repetition	5	9
2. Rephrasing	1	2
Sub-total	6	11
D. Appeal for help	2	4
Sub-total	2	4
Total	55	100

Cf: CB = Communication Breakdown

According to Table 2, it is clear that subjects showed a strong preference for ‘global clarification’ in which they simply stated “I don’t understand,” indicated their non-understanding by saying “What?” or “Pardon?,” and asked partners to give further explanation or more information by saying “What do you mean?” in order to express their communication problems in chatting. The following is one typical example of how subjects used the signal of global clarification:

S7: Hello.
S8: Hello.
S7: It's my first time.
S8: What?
S7: I don't have experience English chatting.
S8: Oh~ I see. Me, too.

As shown from S8 who expressed her non-understanding by saying "What?" in this example, many subjects liked to employ "What?" or "Pardon me?" to indicate their non-understanding in chatting, which accounted for 42% of a total frequency of signals used to display communication breakdown. The next example illustrates the second most frequently used signal of global clarification, i.e., 'request for further explanation,' which constitutes 16% of a total number of signals used to display communication breakdown.

S9: What are you going to do after school?
S10: I took a festival for three days.
S9: What do you mean?
S10: I want to enjoy this. So I have a plan with my junior.
S9: Have you ever enjoyed any other festival?
S10: Yes.

In a second turn-taking, S9 responded to S10's utterance "I took a festival for three days" by asking a question "What do you mean?" in order to get more explanation or information on that utterance.

Regarding 'local clarification' as the second most frequently used signal (16%) to indicate communication breakdown, subjects repeated what was said by referring back to a particular lexical item causing a communication problem, asked for further explanation by saying "What do you mean by …?" or "Can you explain about …?," and wanted chatting partners to provide a meaning of a given word or expression by stating "What is …?" The following are some examples of signals of local clarification:

S11: Do you know the song of Do Le Mi? The Sound of Music
S12: Yes. What are you going to do with that song? Do you want to sing that song?
S11: I think that if we can find the lyrics.
S12: Hmmm.
S11: It features the Direct Method.
S12: Is there any other words that can explain what 'feature' means?
S11: I mean when you sing the song you will learn the notes.

In this example, S12, who experienced the difficulty of non-understanding of an utterance containing a word, 'feature,' asked S11 to provide an explanation of this word by

saying "Is there any other words that can explain what 'feature' means?" in order to indicate his communication problem.

S13: War makes another war and blood causes more blood. That is the universal rule.
S14: I agree with your opinion. In spite of a demonstration of support, American high-ranking officials don't give the Iraq war up.
S13: What's your mean?? Demonstration of support?
S14: a demonstration of support about the Iraq war …
S13: I see. Anti-war. Right.

Rather than asking for more explanation as in the previous example, the example here contained the request of S13 inquiring about a meaning of a specific expression, i.e., 'Demonstration of support?' which was sure to interfere with a successful processing of the first sentence uttered by S14. This communication problem was resolved by the addition of further information by S14.

Finally, 'local confirmation' and 'appeal for help' were far less popular than the first two signals, which accounted for only 19% of all signals used to indicate communication breakdown. In the case of using the signal of local confirmation, subjects repeated a previously mentioned word, phrase or utterance to check their understanding, and paraphrased an original utterance with some changes in form, but little difference in meaning as conversation below illustrated:

S15: Good for her. Does she live near your house?
S16: No, she lives in the country around Hayang.
S15: Is the father of your's mother living now, too?
S16: the father of your's mother?
S15: Yes. That means, your mother's father.

3. Strategies Used to Overcome Communication Breakdown

In their efforts to overcome non-understanding or misunderstanding during chatting, subjects were found to employ a variety of strategies such as elaboration, self-correction, avoidance, recast, repetition and asking for help.

TABLE 3

Strategies Used to Overcome Communication Breakdown in Chatting

Strategies	Frequency	% of total number of strategies
Elaboration	36	70
Self-correction	6	11
Avoidance	5	9
Repetition	3	6

Recast	1	2
Asking for help	1	2
Total	52	100

According to Table 3, subjects used a strategy of elaboration most frequently, which accounted for 70% of a total frequency of strategies. To help chatting partners to escape from communication breakdown and gain a better understanding of speech directed to them, most subjects elaborated on their output in such a way that they used an alternative lexical item, gave description of a target object or term, and offered detailed explanation or further information. The following example shows one such use of elaboration:

S17: No. I don't want to marry.
S18: Then, do you want to remain single all your life?
S17: Maybe.
S18: Why?
S17: I don't know about the meaning of wedding.
S18: You are uncertain about wedding.
S17: What do you mean?
S18: I mean you are pessimistic about wedding.
S17: Yes. I think so.

S18 tried to make her utterance "You are uncertain about wedding" more understandable to S17 by choosing an alternative word, 'pessimistic' to replace 'uncertain,' which was successful in resolving S17's communication problem.

Other strategies used relatively often include self-correction, avoidance and recast, which constituted 26% of all the strategies. As names of these strategies display, subjects self-corrected what they said before, tried to ignore their partner's problem of non-understanding, and stated what was said in a correct way. The following are some examples of how such strategies as self-correction and avoidance were used in data.

S19: I ate about 1 hour ago with Ji-yeong. We ate in Maxim Hall.
S20: I ate lunch outside school with my friend.
S19: Are there alone?
S20: What?
S19: Are you there alone?
S20: Here?
S19: Yes.
S20: No. There are many people in PC room.

It is obvious that S19's self-correction of her sentence 'Are there alone?' improved the comprehensibility of this sentence for S20 to a great extent. Thus S19's attempt at self-

correction proved to be quite effective in getting the on-going conversation on the right track.

S21: I have two exams in May.
S22: Oh~ not good.
S21: So nowadays I am so busy.
S22: So, do you prepare for all the things?
S21: No, I don't, because I have many homeworks!!
S22: Hum, you have short time to study.
S21: Yes, but I have a plan of the exams.
S22: How?? Can you tell me?
S21: Just of me. There are not match you.
S22: Sorry. I can't understand your saying … You may use Korean.
S21: Sorry, telephone is ringing. Hmm. I can't transfer my thinking to you so sorry.

This example shows how S21 avoided helping S22 know about his plan for exams. Despite S22's request for more explanation for his plan, S21 rejected the request because he knew that he was unable to express his thoughts or opinions in English. As a result, communication breakdown in this case was not resolved successfully, and both S21 and S22 seemed to be faced with a situation in which they had to make a decision of whether to change a topic to continue their conversation or to stop it.

4. Closing Exchanges Containing Communication Breakdown

To determine to what extent subjects were able to spot and got over communication breakdown during chatting, their exchanges containing communication breakdown were analyzed in terms of three ways of closing exchanges: notice & successful negotiation, notice & unsuccessful negotiation, and un-notice & no negotiation.

TABLE 4

Way of Closing Exchanges Containing Communication Breakdown in Chatting

Ways of closing exchanges containing CB	Frequency	% of total number of exchanges containing CB
1. Notice & Successful Negotiation	49	89
2. Notice & Unsuccessful Negotiation	4	7
3. Un-notice & No Negotiation	2	4
Total	55	100

Cf: CB = Communication Breakdown

According to Table 4 above, almost nine out of ten communication breakdowns (89%) in chatting were noticed and resolved in a successful manner. This indicates that most of the time, subjects as both speaker and hearer made efforts to help each other in a way that their messages were made comprehensible and understandable to ensure the attainment of a communicative goal at a given point in time of chatting. In contrast, there were some occasions (i.e., four cases) in which subjects noted the occurrence of communication breakdown, but could not handle it in a satisfactory manner. As shown earlier, some of the main reasons for unsuccessful closing of exchange containing communication breakdown lied in avoidance and inability to express what was in speaker's mind. The following example shows no occurrence of meaning negotiation despite a presence of signal of non-understanding.

S23: It's rainy. I don't like rain.
S24: I don't like rain, too.
S23: Whenever it is raining, I am very gloomy.
S24: Hmm. So that
S23: ??????????
S24: I don't like to take an umbrella.
S23: Yes. Me too.
S24: That is a burden.

S23 and S24 were successful in communication before S24 said something incomplete in her second turn-taking. S23 gave her signal of non-understanding by using a question mark, but S24 went ahead to initiate another topic without any notice of S23's non-understanding. Such no perception led to no negotiation of meaning to solve S23's communication problem.

To summarize, subjects in the study were found to suffer communication difficulties due mainly to incoherent, uncooperative talk and lack of background knowledge during chatting. In contrast, they had fewer communication problems with linguistically-related elements such as grammar and vocabulary. From this finding it follows that for Korean subjects, linguistic errors had a less debilitating effect on a successful transmission of message in chatting than text- or discourse-related errors. This suggests a clear, strong need for much attention to inter-sentential relatedness in talk by string sentences together in a meaningful, cohesive way rather than being obsessed with grammaticality of individual sentences in everyday interaction where meaning is primary, and social harmony is achieved and maintained through a successful transmission of message.

As for signals used to display communication breakdown, subjects depended mainly upon global clarification in which they either stated non-understanding simply by 'I don't

know,' or indicated their problem of communication by 'What?' or 'Pardon?' This is understandable in the sense that since in everyday exchange conversation participants usually have insufficient time for preplanning what to say or checking for grammaticality of their output, they tend to prefer simple and accurate signals to indicate their non-understanding whenever it happens. Concerning strategies employed by subjects to overcome communication breakdown, they showed a strong preference for elaboration and self-correction which constituted about 80% of all the strategies used in chatting. Though an over-reliance on two strategies led to a resolution of communication breakdown and a management of chatting, it also reflects a narrow range of strategies that is likely to result from underdevelopment of strategic competence in Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence, and should be extended to include a wider variety of communication strategies for smoother and more effective interaction. Lastly, faced with communication breakdown, subjects were able to notice them most of the time, resolve them through meaning negotiation, and reach a successful closing of talk. This means that Korean subjects possessed basic interpersonal skills which enabled them to express their communication difficulties to interlocutors when they occurred, and to take appropriate actions to get over the difficulties in their own ways although a clear and definite need still exists for Korean subjects to continue to improve and extend communication skills of meaning negotiation.

V. CONCLUSION

The main focus of this study was on a variety of aspects of meaning negotiation process in online chatting. Korean college students were engaged in chatting on the Internet for a semester-long period, and chatting scripts were analyzed in terms of four main aspects of meaning negotiation such as sources of communication breakdown, signals of communication breakdown, strategies to get over communication breakdown, and ways of closing talk containing communication breakdown. The overall findings of the study indicated that faced with communication breakdown created mostly by discoursal and linguistic causes, subjects sent out a variety of signals to let partners recognize their communication difficulties, and used different strategies to overcome such difficulties (Kim, 2008; Shim, 2007). It was also found that despite subjects' ability to handle communication problems in a way leading to a resolution of them in most cases, they showed limitations in a range of communication strategies used to indicate and solve communication breakdown. This suggests a clear need for the extension of a repertoire of communication strategies that would help subjects engage in negotiation for meaning in a smoother and more effective manner.

The study suffers some weaknesses which may limit its generalizability. First, gender discrepancy in sample may have had a negative effect on the overall findings of the study since males and females might differ considerably from each other in the way of expressing and resolving communication problems (Romaine, 2003). Second, no effort in the study was made to determine what played a significant role in influencing the way in which Korean subjects dealt with communication breakdown during chatting. So it would be interesting and desirable to compare the findings of the study with the way in which EFL textbooks of middle and high schools teach how to cope with communication breakdown in interaction. Only such a comparison could show possible relationships between what appears in textbooks and students' treatment of communication difficulties in EFL learning contexts.

The conversational ability to cope with communication problems during talk is known as one crucial component of communicative competence. If such problems are handled inappropriately over and over again, learners get to have weak willingness to take part in interaction and be deprived of chances for input exposure indispensable for a success of L2 learning. So a constant development and enhancement of conversational ability for meaning negotiation is sure to increase learner contact with both native and non-native participants in interaction, which is conducive to an overall promotion of communicative competence in English.

REFERENCES

Brown, D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed.). Longman.

Bruton, A., & Samuda, V. (1980). Learner and teacher roles in the treatment of error in group work. *RELC Journal, 11,* 49-63.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, 1,* 1-47.

Chu, H. R. (2006). Interactional modifications in text-based chats between Korean and Japanese students. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 12,* 1-18.

Diaz-Rico, L. T. (2004). Views of teaching and learning. In L. T. Diaz-Rico (Ed.), *Teaching English learners: Strategies and methods* (pp. 30-65). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Doughty, C., & Pica, T. (1986). "Information gap" tasks: Do they facilitate second language acquisition? *TESOL Quarterly, 20,* 305-325.

Ellis, R. (1997). *Second language acquisition*. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.

Gaies, S. J. (1983). Learner feedback: An exploratory study of its role in the second language classroom. In H. W. Seliger & M. H. Long (Eds.), *Classroom-oriented*

research in second language acquisition (pp. 287-297). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Gregg, K. (1984). Krashen's monitor and Occam's razor. *Applied Linguistics, 5*, 79-100.

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics, Vol. 3: Speech acts* (pp. 41-58). New York, NY: Academic Press.

Hatch, E. M. (1983). *Psycholinguistics: A second language perspective*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Kim, Y. K. (2008). Meaning negotiation processes of communication breakdowns in L2 learners' interactions in the classroom. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 14*, 51-72.

Ko, J. M. (2005). Is negotiation of meaning effective in a narrative task? *English Teaching, 60*, 149-165.

Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press.

Long, M. H. (1981). Questions in foreigner talk discourse. *Language Learning, 31*, 135-157.

Long, M. H. (1983). Linguistic and conversational adjustments to non-native speakers. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 5*, 177-249.

Long, M. H. (1985). Input and second language acquisition theory. In S. M. Gass & C. G. Madden (Eds.), *Input and second language acquisition* (pp. 377-393). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Long, M., & Sato, C. (1983). Classroom foreigner talk discourse: Forms and functions of teacher's questions. In H. W. Seliger & M. H. Long (Eds.), *Classroom-oriented research in second language acquisition* (pp. 268-286). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Mackey, A. (1999). Input, interaction and second language development: An empirical study of question formation in ESL. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 21*, 557-587.

McDonough, K. (2004). Learner-learner interaction during pair and small group activities in a Thai EFL context. *System, 32*, 207-224.

McLaughlin, B. (1987). *Theories of second-language learning*. London: Edward Arnold.

Munsell, P., & Carr, T. (1981). Monitoring the monitor: A review of second language acquisition and second language learning. *Language Learning, 31*, 493-502.

Omagio-Hadley, A. (2001). *Teaching language in context* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Pica, T., & Doughty, C. (1985). Input and interaction in the communicative language classroom: A comparison of teacher-fronted and group activities. In S. M. Gass &

C. G. Madden (Eds.), *Input and second language acquisition* (pp. 115-132). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Porter, A. P. (1983). *Variations in the conversations of adults learners of English as a function of proficiency level of the participants*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Standford University.

Porter, A. P. (1986). How learners talk to each other: Input and interaction in task-centered discussions. In R. Day (Ed.), *Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition* (pp. 200-222). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Romaine, S. (2003). Variation. In C. Doughty & M. Long (Eds.), *The handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 409-435). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Saville-Troike, M. (2006). Social contexts of second language acquisition. In M. Saville-Troike (Ed.), *Introducing second language acquisition* (pp. 100-132). Cambridge University Press.

Scarcella, R. C., & Oxford, R. L. (1994). *The tapestry of language learning: The individual in the communicative classroom*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Shim, Y. S. (2007). Negotiation of meaning between an L2 teacher and students in face-to-face interactions and CMC. *English Teaching, 62*, 265-288.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. M. Gass & C. G. Madden (Eds.), *Input and second language acquisition* (pp. 235-253). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Van Lier, L. A. W. (1988). *The classroom and the language learner*. London: Longman.

Varonis, E., & Gass, S. (1985). Non-native/non-native conversations: A model for negotiation of meaning. *Applied Linguistics, 6*, 71-90.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Appendix

I. Definition and examples of sources of communication breakdown adjusted from Kim's (2008) coding scheme (Bold-faced parts indicate communication breakdown created by a given source concerned).

1. Lexical: Difficult or inappropriate use of word is a main barrier to a successful transmission of message.

Example)

S1: Maybe your girl friend can play the piano. Ask her.
S2: I asked her yet.
S1: So in fact, I have a **lover**. Don't you think that I'm crazy.
S2: What do you mean? I don't understand what you say.

S1: the lover means. The person who has a sexual relationship, but … I can't remember the word that indicates the person whom I like or love.

2. Grammar: Ungrammaticality or incorrectness of phrase- or sentence-level utterance is a main barrier to a successful transmission of message.
Example)
S1: It is very important to have power of culture, economics and so on …
S2: **But U.S.A. doesn't know the fact which is not alone.**
S1: What does this sentence mean?
S2: After all, we have to live to help every country.

3. Discourse: Unsystematic, incoherent string of text and little semantic unity among sentences in text play a major role in interfering with a successful transmission of message.
Example)
S1: What did you do after class?
S2: I just went academy and went home. I was very sad today.
S1: Oh, Make a boyfriend!
S2: I hope so.
S1: **How about your sister?**
S2: What?
S1: Does your sister have boyfriend?
S2: No, we were sad together.

4. Background knowledge: Sudden mentioning of something (e.g., terminology, object, and concept) difficult or unfamiliar to understand, and not shared by both speaker and hearer can create communication difficulties.
Example)
S3: Travel makes our mind broaden.
S4: Right! Paris is very beautiful city. Notre-dame, Seine, Rouvre museum. There are thirty four bridges.
S3: France is a historically good, beautiful country.
S4: The famous bridge is **pong-neuf**.
S3: pong-neuf???
S4: Do you know "Lovers of pong-neuf"? Cinema
S3: Yes, I heard about it. But I didn't see the movie.

5. Mechanics: Writing mistakes involving incorrect use of spelling, comma, or period can create communication difficulties.
Example)
S1: Don't you think that father's present is not easy?
S2: I don't understand what you mean.

S1: Oh, sorry. I mean, I gave him the same thing during 3-4 years. Choosing father's present is very difficult.
S2: Same here. This month we have a lot of holidays. So I'm **wiotui erugdfn m,g**
S1: Pardon me?
S2: Sorry, I'm very happy to check out the calendar.
S1: Because of breaking classes?
S2: Of course. You too??

II. Definition and examples of signals used to indicate communicate breakdown taken from Shim's (2007, p. 273-283) coding scheme (Bold-faced parts represents communication breakdown created by a given source concerned).

1. Global clarification: This is a signal to "indicate non-understanding of the entire utterance previously produced and alerts the speaker of the need to repeat or explain what he or she has said"

1) Explicit statement of non-understanding: "I don't know" "I don't understand"
2) Indication of global non-understanding: "What?" "Pardon me?"
3) Request for further explanation: "Can you explain more?" "What do you mean?"

2. Local clarification: This is a signal to indicate a communication problem through referring to a particular lexical item creating a problem.

1) Repetition: Duplication of a previously mentioned word, phrase or sentence with indication of non-understanding
S1: You look confident.
S2: Ah? What? **Confident?**

2) Request for further explanation: "What do you mean by …?" "Is there any other words that can explain …?"
S11: Do you know the song of Do Le Mi? The Sound of Music
S12: Yes. What are you going to do with that song? Do you want to sing that song?
S11: I think that if we can find the lyrics.
S12: Hmmm.
S11: It features the Direct Method.
S12: **Is there any other words that can explain what 'feature' means?**
S11: I mean when you sing the song you will learn the notes.

3) Request for meaning of a specific lexical item: "What is …?"
S1: There are a lot of things to find for it.
S2: What subject is it?
S1: American history. It makes me crazy.
S2: Who's the professor?
S1: x x x
S2: I'm taking his class.

S1: **What is that?**
S2: Economy of America
S1: I took it when I was a junior.

3. Local confirmation: This is a signal to check an understanding of a previously mentioned word, phrase, or sentence.
1) Repetition: Duplication of the whole or part of a previous sentence to check an understanding of it
S1: Do you admit it?
S2: **Admit?** Ah~ I got it. I agree.
S1: I mean, do you know a few people like him?
S2: I agree with your statement
2) Rephrasing: Recreating an original sentence with some changes in form, but little meaning difference
S1: What do you do?
S2: I'm a civil servant. And I'm a student, too.
S1: **You mean you study at night?**
S2: Yes.

4. Appeal for help: This is a signal to indicate a communication problem through "asking for aid from the interlocutor either directly or indirectly" (Brown, 2007, p. 138).
S1: Listen to me.
S2: Keep going.
S1: As you know, **how do you say "얼마전에" in English? Please~**
S2: You mean a few months ago?
S1: No, a few days ago. OK. Listen again~

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Secondary

Jae-Suk Suh
Department of English Education, Inha University
Younghyun-dong Nam-gu, Incheon
Tel: 032-860-7854
Email: jssuh@inha.ac.kr

Received in July 15, 2010
Reviewed in August 20, 2010
Revised version received in September 15, 2010