

Effects of Teachers' and Learners' Beliefs on Negotiation for Meaning and Negative Feedback during Interactions in EFL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

Negotiation for meaning has long been claimed to advance language acquisition. However, the classroom conditions which promote negotiation for meaning remain unclear since these interactional adjustments have been mostly explored under controlled classroom environments. Motivated by this, the present study aims to develop an understanding of the factors that limit teachers and learners from engaging in negotiated interactions in English as foreign language classrooms. In order to attain this, it firstly examines the incidence of negotiation for meaning during undisturbed interactions in three English classes. Drawing on perceptual data from teacher interviews and learner focus groups, it then explores the influence of teachers' and learners' beliefs on negotiation for meaning and negative feedback. The findings corroborate that the incidence of negotiation for meaning is scarce, and lower than the reported in previous studies. The study goes further to suggest that teachers' and learners' beliefs heavily impact not only on the quantity of negotiation for meaning, but also on its nature. These findings enhance our understanding of possible ways through which negotiation for meaning may be enhanced during classroom interactions.

KEY WORDS: Classroom interactions; English as a foreign language; negotiation for meaning; negative feedback; teacher and learner beliefs.

INTRODUCTION

Since the construct of negotiation for meaning (NfM) was put forward by Michael Long in 1980, interactionist research directed the attention towards these interactional processes. The reason of this is because these adjustments encourage L2 acquisition. However, the findings have been surrounded by controversy since NfM has been found to be scarce in the language classroom (Foster, 1998; Foster & Ohta, 2005; García Mayo & Pica, 2000; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; to name just a few). Moreover, due to its scarcity, research has explored NfM under controlled conditions which sometimes do not reflect the interactions that are initiated in real language classrooms.

Motivated by the above arguments, the present study set out to investigate the interplay between the incidence of NfM and teachers' and learners' beliefs. This firstly involved identifying the interactional moves that lead to NfM; secondly, the extent to which these beliefs impact on these interactional processes. This study provides some new insights into the perceptual factors that limit NfM. Moreover, it enhances our understanding of how teachers and learners can potentially be assisted in promoting NfM in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms.

The overall structure of this paper takes the form of four parts. It first provides a brief review of research literature on NfM and teacher and learner beliefs. It then goes on to describe the research context, participants, and data collection and analysis. After outlining the study, it proceeds to present and discuss the findings into the incidence of NfM, and the effects of teachers' and learners' beliefs. It concludes by suggesting some pedagogical implications, and further research to consolidate and generalize from these findings.

BACKGROUND

NfM has been widely associated with the Interaction Hypothesis formulated by Long (1980, 1983, 1996). In his revised version of this hypothesis, Long (1996) argues that:

“Negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the NS or a more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways” (pp. 451-452).

In other words, language acquisition is claimed to be fostered when both a teacher (a more competent interlocutor) and learners (less competent speakers) engage in interactional processes towards adjusting and restructuring problem utterances in a lexical, phonological, morphosyntactic way for the sake of arriving at mutual understanding (Foster & Ohta, 2005). During these processes, language data are fine-tuned through modified utterances (i.e., repetitions, reformulations, rephrasings, expansions) which increases learners’ comprehensibility and provides them with negative feedback (i.e., metalinguistic information concerning the clarity, accuracy, and comprehensibility of their messages)(Long, 1996). Moreover, learners’ attention is drawn to non-target-like phonological, lexical, and syntactic forms which allows them to modify their talk in more creative, accurate, and complex ways (i.e., modified output) (Pica, 1996; Swain, 2005).

Following the above claims, a large amount of research has set out to explore the opportunities that teachers and learners have to negotiate meaning. However, it has been frequently found that opportunities for teachers and learners to engage in NfM are scarce during classroom interactions (see, for example, Foster, 1998; Foster & Ohta, 2005; García Mayo & Pica, 2000; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). For example, Foster (1998) found that the incidence of NfM in the dyads and small groups was generally low. Surprisingly, in exploring the distribution of NfM within the dyads and small groups, she found that there were learners who dominated the NfM moves. Foster (1998) and Pica (1996) believe that opportunities for NfM are often unnoticed by language teachers due to the fast pace of classroom communication. Naughton (2006) argues that learners may be reluctant to engage in NfM if it is perceived to undermine fluency. Pica (1996) contends that NfM occurs more frequently in classrooms where incomprehension or breakdowns in communication do not reveal the weaknesses of the participants, but their strengths as interactants.

Due to the fact that NfM is “a rare commodity in classrooms” (Pica, 1996: 254), research since the 1980s has aimed to determine the classroom conditions and tasks that best promote NfM. For example, Doughty and Pica (1986) claim that NfM tends to occur more frequently during tasks which require non-native speaker learners to exchange information. In contrast, Pica, Holliday, Lewis and Morgenthaler (1989) suggest that NfM is promoted during information gap tasks in NNS and NS pairs. However, this research has been widely criticized for suggesting findings under controlled conditions (i.e., modified design of tasks, laboratory settings, and a narrow number of participants who volunteer) (Foster, 1998). Foster and Ohta (2005) argue that designing or modifying tasks may not be effective in promoting NfM and thus language acquisition. In line with this, Pica (1996) contends that “no matter how carefully we structure a class with negotiation-rich activities, we cannot count on negotiation to happen even under the most communicative of circumstances” (p. 258). Drawing on the argument that any full understanding of how and why teachers and learners behave in the classroom requires an investigation of their underlying beliefs (Burke, 2011), it seems possible that by exploring the effects of teachers’ and learners’ beliefs on NfM, we will be able to understand the (perceptual) factors that shape the opportunities for teachers and learners to engage in NfM in the language classroom.

IMPACT OF TEACHER AND LEARNER BELIEFS

In research literature, people have been described as individuals who continuously construct and conceptualise episodes or memories for explaining significant practices in relation to “who they are, where they are, and what to do in a specific situation” (Negueruela-Azarola, 2011: 362). This is not the exemption in language classrooms; teachers and learners also construct and act on beliefs about their immediate teaching and learning context. At this point, it is useful to define the term ‘belief’, which in this study is used to refer to the teachers’ and learners’ affective, evaluative and experiential memories of pedagogical principles, teaching and learning practices, and locally-situated needs and practical constraints (the author, 2016).

An emerging body of research has found that teachers’ and learners’ beliefs impact in complex ways on their interactional behaviour, shaping learner involvement, language achievement and thus the effectiveness of classroom interactions (see, for example, Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Yoshida, 2013). In particular, beliefs about contextually-situated needs and constraints (e.g., class time constraints, large number of learners, etc.) have been found to heavily influence the nature of teaching and learning practices (Borg & Burns, 2008; Burke, 2011). Moreover, empirical studies have found that beliefs about classroom practices which may potentially involve a loss of face, influencing emotions, have significant effects on how the way teachers and learners behave in the classroom, encouraging them to avoid them (Naughton, 2006). This point is of great importance for the purpose of this study because it suggests that the low incidence of NfM reported in previous studies may have been in response to teachers’ and learners’ beliefs about this negotiation work as face-threatening interactional processes. Thus, drawing on the argument that any full understanding of teachers’ and learners’ interactions in

the language classroom requires an investigation of their underlying beliefs, the present study not only investigates the incidence, but also explores, for the first time, the effects of teachers' and learners' beliefs on negotiated interactions. Four research questions (RQs) guide the present study:

1. How often do teachers and learners negotiate meaning during uncontrolled interactions across the three proficiency levels?
2. What is the distribution of negotiation moves during these interactions?
3. To which extent do teachers' and learners' beliefs impact on NfM?
4. What are the implications of RQs 1-3?

METHODOLOGY THE STUDY

The present study resided in a naturalistic as well as exploratory inquiry. It adopted a multiple data-gathering approach with a view to developing an understanding of the participants' classroom practices and meanings (Lillis, 2008):

- For interactional data:1) recorded classroom interactions
- For perceptual data:2) teacher interviews and 3)learner focus groups

The rationale behind the use of the above research instruments is that interactional as well as perceptual data provide insights into the interplay between classroom interactional behavior and beliefs (Wesely, 2012), which a large number of empirical studies exploring classroom interactions have failed to combine (De Costa, 2011). According to Lillis (2008), the importance of these research tools is that they not only allow a thick description of what may prove to be potentially significant, but also help researchers maintain an openness to what may be important to the participants.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The present study took place in a Mexican university. In this research context, learners need to learn English as a foreign language, and take modules which train them to become language teachers or translators after a five-year training programme. It is common in this context that most learners opt to major in EFL teaching. Specifically, the study was conducted in three classrooms at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. Learners in courses at basic and intermediate levels practice English during six hours per week. At advanced levels, learners study English during five hours per week.

PARTICIPANTS

In total, 63 learners voluntarily accepted to participate in the study (17 at the basic level; 26 at the intermediate level; and 20 at the advanced level). All the learners were Mexican, their age ranged from 18 to 24 years, and spoke Spanish as an L1. The majority of the learners had linguistic backgrounds from state schools, where language practice normally involves five hours per week. A low proportion of learners had linguistic background from private schools where English is practiced from 15 to 20 hours per week. The teachers also decided to participate in the study. The three teachers were women, born and raised in Mexico, spoke Spanish as an L1. They all stated that they had been learning English for 14 or more years, and teaching it for seven or more years.

DATA COLLECTION

Classroom interactions at the three proficiency levels were recorded between the weeks beginning November 4 and 15, 2013, following the claim that they can provide a detailed and comprehensive description of participants' interactional behaviour in a naturally-occurring way (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). The interactions were recorded by one of the researchers in two sessions of two hours (100 minutes approximately) at each proficiency level. During these sessions, the teachers' teaching style, structure of the class, tasks, number of learners, time were not modified. In total, 600 minutes of classroom interactions were recorded, 200 minutes approximately from each proficiency level. After having recorded the interactions, the data were transcribed

completely, and segmented into teacher-led interactions (TLIs) and learner-led interactions (LLIs) (See Appendices I and II for more information about these interactions, tasks, and length).

Teacher interviews were included in this study in order to develop an understanding of how the teacher participants make sense of interactions in relation to the context which they inhabit (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The teacher interviews were conducted by one of the researchers, after the recorded classroom interactions. In order to guide the interviews, a list of ten questions was used to understand the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding NfM. In the case of the learner focus groups, Gibbs (1997) claims that they allow researchers to gain insights into people's beliefs, attitudes and values from individual as well as group perspectives. Thus, three focus groups were carried out with five learners from each proficiency level. They were selected randomly from the teachers' attendance list, and invited to participate under no obligation. They all agreed to participate in the focus groups which were arranged at their convenience. A list of 10 questions was used to facilitate and guide the oral interactions between the researcher and learners. The teacher interviews and learner focus groups lasted around 20 minutes. They both were conducted in Spanish so as to avoid the learners' anxiety about the correctness of their utterances in the L2. For analysis purposes, the oral interactions during the interviews and focus groups were recorded, and transcribed in their entirety.

All participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, and provided consent to participate. Complying with their right to be protected from identification, the learners' names and identities were carefully anonymized in the data. Instead, abbreviations and pseudonyms are used. The words 'Teacher' (or letter 'T') and 'Learner' (or letter 'L' and an identification number, e.g., Learner 5) are used to refer to teachers and learners in the extracts, analysis and discussions.

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to examine the incidence of communication breakdowns that lead to NfM at the three proficiency levels, we identified and quantified NfM moves, which are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Negotiation Moves

Moves	Specification
1.Comprehension checks	These questions initiated to establish whether a preceding utterance has been understood by the interlocutor (Long, 1980).
2.Confirmation checks	There are elicitions to obtain confirmation that a preceding utterance by the interlocutor has been correctly understood or heard by the speaker (Long, 1980).
3.Clarification requests	These are mostly wh- or bipolar questions which are initiated to elicit clarification or new information of the interlocutor's preceding utterance(s) (Long, 1980).

Besides opportunities to reestablish communication, NfM are claimed to be a source of negative feedback (i.e., explicit or implicit information that is provided to learners concerning erroneous forms in their oral production) (Long, 1996). According to Long (1996), negative feedback during NfM can take several forms, including grammar explanations, explicit and implicit feedback, recasts, and communication breakdowns followed by repair sequences. With a view to exploring the learners' opportunities to receive and provide negative feedback during NfM, we also coded and explored corrective repetitions (explicit feedback) and recasts (implicit feedback), as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Feedback moves

Move	Specification
4.Corrective repetitions	Language information which is provided to reshape another speaker's utterance. These are the most common types of feedback moves which usually contain an additional feature, for example, stress or lengthening of a segment, questioning intonation, etc. (Chaudron, 1988).
5.Recasts	These are reformulations which are initiated to reshape or refine all or part of others' utterances (Long, 1996; Walsh, 2006). Recasts need to 1) contain content words of a preceding incorrect utterance; 2) reshape utterances in a phonological, syntactic, morphological or lexical way (Braid, 2002); and 3) focus on meaning rather than form (Long & Robinson, 1998).

Because the purpose of the study was not to test a hypothesis but to explore the incidence and nature of NfM in the EFL classrooms, the data were calculated using simple total and averages. Firstly, the total numbers were obtained by counting the occurrences of NfM and the moves that triggered them. Secondly, averages were calculated by dividing the total number of NfMs and negotiation moves per the total number of TLIs or LLIs. The perceptual data from the interviews and focus groups were analyzed following a meaning categorization which is believed to facilitate the identification of patterns, themes, and meaning (Berg, 2009). This involved identifying extracts manually, and attributing them to theme categories and sub-categories which emerged from the data:

Negotiations for meaning

1. Negotiations at word level
2. No need for negotiations
3. Negotiations not initiated by learners
4. Negotiations as face-threatening processes

Negative feedback

1. Positive attitude towards negative feedback
2. Perceived benefits of negative feedback
3. Negative attitude towards negative feedback
4. Teachers not providing learners with negative feedback

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

INCIDENCE OF NEGOTIATION FOR MEANING

In addressing RQ1 (i.e., how often do teachers and learners negotiate meaning during uncontrolled interactions across the three proficiency levels? And RQ2 (i.e., what is the distribution of negotiation moves during these interactions?), the findings corroborate that the incidence of NfM is considerably low in the TLIs and LLIs at the three proficiency levels. The distribution of the negotiation moves indicates that a high number of NfMs were triggered by confirmation checks and clarification requests. Negotiations initiated to provide negative feedback were more frequent in the LLIs than in the TLIs across proficiency levels, as detailed below.

Table 3. Negotiation for Meaning in the TLIs (Basic Level)

	TLI 1	TLI 2	TLI 3	TLI 4	TLI 5	Average
NfMs	3	3	8	5	2	4.2
Comprehension check	0	1	1	2	0	0.8
Confirmation check	2	1	6	1	1	2.2
Clarification request	2	1	1	4	1	1.8
Corrective repetition	0	2	0	2	1	1.0
Recast	0	0	1	0	1	0.4
No. of NfM moves	4	5	9	9	4	6.2

TLI=Teacher-led interaction; NfMs=Negotiations for meaning

Table 3 shows that the basic teacher and learners engaged in two to eight NfMs during the TLIs, with an average of 4.2 NfMs per TLI. Interestingly, it can be seen that not all the moves led to NfM. This was the case of comprehension checks which served a purpose of discourse markers rather than negotiation moves. As also shown in Table 3, meaning was negotiated through checking confirmations (an average of 2.2 per TLI) and requesting clarifications (an average of 1.8 per TLI). NfMs to provide negative feedback were frequent in these TLIs. It seems possible that the teacher was compelled to provide learners with negative feedback by repeating their contributions due to the learners' beginner proficiency level. However, as we shall see, these feedback moves were infrequent in the TLIs and LLIs at the intermediate and advanced levels, suggesting that there were other more pressing factors, possibly the teachers' and learners' beliefs, which hindered them from providing negative feedback during NfM. In the case of the LLIs, Table 4 shows an increase of NfMs compared to the NfMs initiated in the TLIs.

Table 4. Negotiation for Meaning in the LLIs (Basic Level)

	LLI 1	LLI 2	LLI 3	LLI 4	LLI 5	LLI 6	Average
NfMs	4	8	8	13	12	13	9.6
Comprehension check	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Confirmation check	4	5	6	7	5	12	6.5
Clarification request	2	4	2	14	7	6	5.8
Corrective repetition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Recast	0	4	2	4	1	0	1.8
No. of NfM moves	6	13	10	25	13	18	14.16

LLI=Learner-led interaction; NfMs=Negotiations for meaning

Learners engaged in four to 13 NfMs across the LLIs, an average of 9.6 NfMs per LLI. As in the TLIs, not all the moves led to NfMs; the NfMs were mostly initiated to check confirmations and request clarifications. Interestingly, the learners engaged in a higher number of NfMs involving recasts in the LLIs than in the TLIs (average of 1.8 recasts per LLI compared to 0.4 recasts per TLI), during which the teachers may have perceived as face-threatening. In these LLIs, NfMs involving comprehension checks and corrective repetitions were absent.

Unlike the basic level, Tables 4 and 5 indicate that the intermediate teacher and learners engaged in a greater number of NfMs than the LLIs (an average of 9.0 NfMs per TLI compared to 6.1 NfMs per LLI), and then the TLIs at the basic and advanced level (see below). However, as in interactions at the other two proficiency levels, not all the moves led to NfMs, and NfMs were mostly initiated by confirmation checks and clarification requests.

Table 5. Negotiation for Meaning in the TLIs (Intermediate Level)

	TLI 1	TLI 2	TLI 3	TLI 4	Average
NfMs	9	10	13	4	9.0
Comprehension check	0	0	3	4	1.7
Confirmation check	8	7	10	1	6.5
Clarification request	4	5	6	4	4.7
Corrective repetition	0	0	0	0	0
Recast	0	1	2	0	0.7
No. of NfM moves	12	13	21	9	13.7

TLI=Teacher-led interaction; NfMs=Negotiations for meaning

Table 5 shows that the teacher and learners engaged in a range of four to 13 NfMs during the TLIs, 9.0 NfMs per TLI. Again, not all the moves initiated NfMs, and a high number of NfMs were initiated by confirmation checks (an average of 6.5 per TLI) and clarification requests (an average of 4.7 per TLI). Again, NfMs to provide negative feedback (i.e., corrective repetitions and recasts) were not frequent in these TLIs.

Table 6. Negotiation for Meaning in the LLIs (Intermediate Level)

	LLI 1	LLI 2	LLI 3	LLI 4	LLI 5	LLI 6	Average
NfMs	7	6	3	7	7	7	6.1
Comprehension check	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Confirmation check	3	5	3	7	5	4	4.5
Clarification request	2	1	0	1	2	5	1.8
Corrective repetition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Recast	4	0	0	0	1	0	0.8
No. of NfM moves	9	6	3	8	8	9	7.1

LLI=Learner-led interaction; NfMs=Negotiations for meaning.

Table 6 shows that the learners engaged in three to seven NfMs during the LLIs (an average of 6.1 per LLI), mostly triggered by confirmation checks and clarification requests. As in the basic LLIs, there is a slight increase of NfMs initiated by recasts during the LLIs compared to the TLIs (an average of 0.8 recasts per LLI compared to 0.7 recasts per TLI). Moreover, comprehension checks and corrective repetitions were absent in these LLIs.

At the advanced level, Table 7 shows that the teacher and learners engaged in only one NfM during TLI 1.

Table 7. Negotiation for Meaning in the TLIs (Advanced Level)

	TLI 1	TLI 2	Average
NfMs	1	0	0.5
Comprehension check	0	7	3.5
Confirmation check	1	0	0.5
Clarification request	0	0	0
Corrective repetition	0	0	0
Recast	0	0	0
No. of NfM moves	1	7	4

TLI=Teacher-led interaction; NfMs=Negotiations for meaning.

Despite the fact that seven comprehension checks were found in TLI 2, none of these initiated an NfM. As pointed out previously, these comprehension checks did not initiate any NfMs due to their function as discourse markers. The NfM initiated in TLI 1 involved one confirmation check. However, the number of NfMs increased in the LLIs, as shown below.

Table 8 Negotiation for meaning in the LLIs (advanced level)

	LLI 1	LLI 2	LLI 3	LLI 4	LLI 5	LLI 6	Average
NfMs	5	7	3	4	5	4	4.6
Comprehension check	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Confirmation check	3	2	2	2	5	5	3.1
Clarification request	2	3	0	2	1	3	1.8
Corrective repetition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Recast	0	3	1	0	0	0	0.6
No. of NfM moves	5	8	3	4	6	0	4.3

LLI=Learner-led interaction; NfMs=Negotiations for meaning.

Table 8 indicates that the advanced learners engaged in three to seven NfMs, 4.6 NfMs per LLI. As at the basic and intermediate levels, these NfMs were not initiated by all the negotiation and feedback moves, and tended to be mostly triggered by confirmation checks, clarification requests, and recasts. In comparing the LLIs at the three proficiency levels, it is clear that the learners at the advanced level engaged in the lowest number of NfMs. What this suggests is that the advanced learners during the LLIs, as well as during the TLIs, had the most limited opportunities to negotiate meaning and receive negative feedback.

As indicated by the above interactional data, the learners at the three proficiency levels engaged in NfMs which ranged from zero to 13, from 0 to 9.0 NfMs per interaction. This figures show that the incidence of NfM across proficiency levels was varied but generally low. Zero to 13 instances of NfM are found to be lower than in other empirical studies (see, for example, Foster, 1998; Foster & Ohta, 2005). Namely, the basic TLIs, the intermediate LLIs, and the advanced TLIs and LLIs showed a low incidence of NfM. The low incidence of NfM during the intermediate and advanced LLIs are somewhat surprising since NfMs are claimed to occur more frequently during learner-led discussions than teacher-led discussions (Ellis, 2012). Moreover, despite claims that NfM tend occur during two-way exchange tasks (Foster, 1998; Doughty & Pica, 1986), the intermediate and advanced LLIs, which met this requirement, did not appear to promote NfM. In general, the limited amount of NfM found in this study is consistent with a large amount of previous interactionist research (Foster, 1998; García Mayo & Pica, 2000; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Walsh, 2002; to name just a few). A possible explanation of its scarcity may have been the teachers' and learners' interactional ability to convey meaning without the need to adjust the communication during the interactions. This suggestion is supported by Foster (1998), García Mayo & Pica (2000) and Naughton (2006), who argue that teachers and learners may perform interactions that are comprehensible to all, making dispensable any negotiated interaction.

Moreover, the interactional data indicated that the moves did not always initiate an NfM, and that a high number of NfMs were initiated to check confirmations and request clarifications, as illustrated in Extracts 1 and 2.

Extract 1 A confirmation check (basic level)

283.L11: //The woman ... calls a taxi//

284.T: **the woman?**

285.L11: //Calls a taxi//

286.T: The woman calls a taxi ... okay ... did you get everything correct?

T=Teacher; L?=Unidentified Learner; L#=Learner and its number in the interaction; LL=Several learners; //AS-unit boundary; <>=clause boundary

In Extract 1, an NfM is initiated by the teacher's lack of understanding. In line 284, she repeats the first part of L11's previous turn in order to trigger the part that she did not understand. L11 provides the part that was not heard (line 285), for which the teacher signals understanding in line 286. Extract 2 shows an NfM triggered by a lack of information in line 349. The teacher in line 350 requests L3 to repeat his utterance, which is extended in line 351. The teacher finalises the negotiated interaction in turn 352 by signalling understanding.

Extract 2 A clarification request (basic level)

348.T: okay why don't we go to Place 1? Okay: ... good any other suggestion?

349.L3: //Why don't we-?//

350.T: Sorry ... say that again?

351.L3: //Why don't we [2] play ... a game?//

352.T: Okay ... let's play a game alright ...

T=Teacher; L?=Unidentified Learner; L#=Learner and its number in the interaction; LL=Several learners; //AS-unit boundary; <>=clause boundary

The high recurrence of NfM initiated by confirmation checks and clarification requests may be explained by the teachers' and learners' perceptions about them as less face-threatening interactional moves. This suggestion is supported by claims that teachers and learners engage in NfM which do not involve a potential loss of face and/or discouraging detours (Foster, 1998; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Naughton, 2006). Moreover, the interactional evidence showed that negotiations to provide negative feedback was absent during the TLIs, but more frequently initiated in the LLIs. From a social perspective, negotiations to provide negative feedback during the TLIs may have been perceived by the teachers and learners as face-threatening, motivating them to avoid them in order to save the learners' face. The LLIs, a more intimate and less face-threatening environment than the TLIs (see McDonough, 2004), may have encouraged the learners to engage in negotiated interactions to provide negative feedback, at least implicitly. What this in turn suggests is that NfM tended to be initiated by confirmation checks and clarification requests as a consequence of the teachers' and learners' beliefs about these negotiation moves as more effective strategies to provide or elicit target-like language forms without involving a loss of learners' face.

Thus, besides the teachers' and learners' ability to convey meaning without the need to negotiate problematic messages, we go further to suggest that it was in fact the teachers' and learners' beliefs about NfM which may have had an impact on the scarcity and limited nature of the negotiation work during the TLIs the LLIs at the three proficiency levels. The following section discusses perceptual data which add weight to the argument that the teachers' and learners' beliefs shaped the incidence and nature of the negotiated interactions.

TEACHERS' AND LEARNERS' BELIEFS AROUND NfM

In order to address RQ3 (i.e., to which extent do teachers' and learners' beliefs impact on NfM?), this section discusses the effects of the teachers' and learners' beliefs on negotiating meaning. The findings of the perceptual data suggest that the teachers' and learners' beliefs shaped the negotiated interactions and, specifically, the moves to provide negative feedback. As discussed below, it appears that it was the teachers' and learners' intersecting, yet conflicting, beliefs that limited the occurrence of NfM and particularly the feedback moves, which were found to be scarce in the interactional data.

During the interviews and focus groups, it was apparent the teachers' and learners' stated value about negotiations to provide negative feedback, for example:

Extract 3 Quote by María (basic level)

"The interactions during which it [negative feedback] is provided may be significant for them during classroom communication. It allows them to have like an alarm to correct. Then, they can produce the same sentence and if they make the same mistake, they will be able to correct it."

Extract 4 Quote by Tanya (intermediate level)

“It is important that they [students] interact with me so I facilitate them with my feedback so that they can use the language accurately in the future. Then, making for the whole class, you realize that the learners are aware and say: ‘I can use this in this situation, and the other in another situation’ and all the class benefits from this.”

As suggested in Extracts 3 and 4, it is clear that both statements reveal the two teachers’ positive attitudes towards negotiations to provide learners with negative feedback. In particular, they indicate perceived benefits for learners’ language awareness and future self-corrections. What is interesting is that negotiations to provide negative feedback were perceived to be beneficial not only to learners with whom negotiations are initiated, but also to the whole class. Positive attitudes towards negotiations to provide negative feedback were also suggested during the three learner focus groups. For example, Learner 5 (basic level) said: “I think it is good that she [the teacher] interacts with us and corrects us.”

However, the three teachers, one learner at the basic level and the five learners at the advanced level believed that negotiations to provide negative feedback were scarce or absent during classroom interactions. For example, Learner 1’s (basic level) suggestion, in “we need that the teacher corrects us,” points to a perceived scarcity of negative feedback. This scarcity is confirmed by Aranza’s statement: “I seldom correct while we are interacting.” The belief that negotiations to provide negative feedback were scarce or absent during classroom interactions was evidenced in the interactional data, which indicated that NfMs to provide negative feedback were not often initiated during the TLIs at the three proficiency levels. Interestingly, the teachers’ responses during the interviews pointed to one main reason that motivated this avoidance:

Extract 5 Quote by Aranza (advanced level)

“Maybe they are fluent but with many mistakes. Thus, I have decided not to correct them during interactions so as not to affect them”

Extract 6 Quote by Tanya (intermediate level)

“While we interact, you must not tell them that their speaking is wrong, you may inhibit them and you could spoil the interaction.”

The above statements suggest Aranza’s and Tanya’s belief that providing learners with negative feedback during negotiated interactions inhibits them from speaking. This belief was shared by the learners during the focus groups, for example:

Extract 7 Quote by Learner 4 (advanced level)

“Some people may feel pressed while interacting with the teacher for fear of being corrected or something like that.”

Again, Learner 4’s statement suggests a belief that NfMs to provide negative feedback had a negative impact on learners’ oral production. From the above perceptual data, it thus appears that the teachers’ and learners’ beliefs about NfM to provide negative feedback were conflicting. That is, the teachers’ and learners’ beliefs about the importance of this negotiated work appear to have conflicted with their beliefs about negative effects of these negotiations on learners’ oral production, as suggested in Aranza’s statement: “it is funny because everybody agrees to receive negative feedback, but when you do it, they [learners] don’t like it that much.” As indicated in Extract 5, it seems that these conflicting beliefs influenced Aranza’s teaching decisions not to provide negative feedback during negotiated interactions. The other two teachers’ responses also suggest teaching decisions influenced by these conflicting beliefs:

Extract 8 Quote by Tanya (intermediate level)

“They perceive negative feedback negatively and take it personal, like exposing them. There are people who take it personal. You need to find like tactics, it is a delicate topic.”

Tanya’s explanation again points to a belief that negotiations to provide negative feedback had negative effects on learners, even at a personal level. As suggested in “you need to find like tactics, it is a delicate topic,” it seems that this belief influenced her teaching decisions. The following two extracts also suggest how the teachers’ and learners’ conflicting beliefs about NfM and negative feedback influenced the basic and intermediate teachers’ teaching and interactional behavior:

Extract 9 Quote by María (basic level)

“Depending on the intimacy for them to express, interact and tell them at the end of the interaction where they were wrong.”

Extract 10 Quote by Tanya (intermediate level)

“The provision of feedback is personalized and without the presence of other learners. Then, you have the freedom to tell them their mistakes and advise them.” “I now do it in a personalized way so as to avoid peer criticisms.”

In María’s and Tanya’s statements, we see again beliefs that NfM to provide learners with negative feedback was perceived as face-threatening (as implied in “depending on the intimacy for them to express”), and had a negative impact on learners (as indicated in “I now do it in a personalized way so as to avoid peer criticisms”). These beliefs appear to have influenced the teachers’ teaching decisions to provide negative feedback privately, and avoid engaging in NfM.

As suggested by the above elicited data, NfM involving negative feedback seems to have been limited by the teachers’ and learners’ conflicting beliefs about them. The teachers and learners valued the role of NfM to provide negative feedback, but they were perceived by both teachers and learners to inhibit learners and thus limit their oral production. This is in accord with Cathcart and Olsen (1976) and Allwright and Bailey (1991), who also found classroom perceptions of feedback moves as face-threatening, despite the fact that learners claimed to value them (Cathcart & Olsen, 1976). In this study, the teachers’ and learners’ conflicting beliefs about NfMs to provide negative feedback appear to have influenced teaching practices, and encouraged the teachers and learners to avoid engaging in them. This thus implies that NfM to provide information concerning the correctness of learners’ utterances and thus push them towards greater accuracy and comprehensibility may have been perceived as face-threatening, or as a sign of incompetence to speak the target language, resulting in an avoidance strategy to save face. As indicated by the high incidence of confirmation checks and clarification requests, the teachers and learners appeared to engage in less face-threatening NfMs, adding further support to the argument that the conflicting beliefs about negative feedback may have impeded the teachers and learners from engaging in negotiated interactions which facilitate negative feedback.

From the above findings and discussion, it seems that the frequency and effectiveness of NfM reside not only on the teacher to plan and carry out negotiation-rich, strategic and supportive classroom interactions, but also on the teacher’s and learners’ willingness to engage in negotiated interactions and assist other peer’s interlanguage development. In order for language classrooms to promote effective NfMs, attention should be drawn to the socio-affective climate between teachers and learners and learner peers, and ways through which teachers and learners can be encouraged to develop a positive attitude and behavior towards negotiating for meaning. This is in line with Naughton’s (2006) suggestion that classroom communication most relevant to interlanguage development is that in which teachers and learners share a need and desire to understand each other, and learn from them. As suggested by Naughton (2006), NfM can be exploited through a classroom climate in which challenging or modifying others’ utterances is not social taboo. In order to address RQ4 (i.e., what are the implications of RQs 1-3?), we can thus put forward the possibility that opportunities to negotiate for meaning and provide negative feedback are enhanced if the teachers and learners are assisted in mediating their cognition through awareness-raising processes (e.g., advice from tutors on more effective interactional behavior, or reflective procedures). These processes may assist teachers and learners in raising an awareness of the interplay between actions and beliefs, resulting in the appropriation of socially co-constructed beliefs which have a beneficial impact on the socio-affective climate of classrooms and teachers’ and learners’ interactional behavior (Yang & Kim, 2011; Yoshida, 2013), in this case, opportunities for NfM in both TLIs and LLIs during which comprehensibility, negative feedback and modified talk are collaboratively and consciously promoted.

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Motivated by the empirical discourse that NfM is essential, yet scarce, during classroom communication, the present study set out to investigate the interplay between incidence of NfM and the effects of teacher and learner beliefs in three EFL classrooms. The study resided in an exploratory and naturalistic inquiry with a view to developing a clear understanding of the factors that impact on the opportunities to negotiate for meaning and provide negative feedback. The findings indicated that the incidence of NfM was varied but scarce across the datasets. In exploring the distribution of moves, it was apparent the NfMs were initiated by certain negotiation and feedback moves. Comprehension checks tended to be initiated by the three teachers during the TLIs, but they did not trigger any instance of NfM. Confirmation checks and clarification requests, which tended to be frequent in both TLIs and LLIs, provided learners with opportunities to modify their talk, but limited opportunities for negative feedback. Corrective repetitions were infrequent in the TLIs and LLIs across

proficiency levels, but negotiated interactions initiated by recasts were more frequent in the LLIs than in the TLIs. This evidence suggests that the negotiation work did not provide learners with all language learning conditions inherent in negotiated interactions (see Pica, 1996). As an attempt to understand the factors that motivate the scarcity and limited nature of NfM, the findings of the perceptual data suggested that it was in fact the teachers' and learners' beliefs which had an impact on the opportunities to negotiate for meaning and provide and receive negative feedback. Based on this, the study suggests that NfM may be promoted if teachers and learners are assisted in mediating their cognition through awareness-raising procedures with a view to enhancing the socio-affective climate in the EFL classroom and thus classroom behavior during negotiated interactions. The above suggestion requires further research. In this research, it would be interesting to assess the impact of awareness-raising procedures on the socio-affective climate in the EFL classrooms, teachers' and learners' cognition, and the opportunities to negotiate for meaning and provide negative feedback. However, it is hoped that this study paves the way for future research which explores ways through which teachers and learners can promote NfM in the language classroom.

Conflict in interests

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I. INFORMATION SUMMARY OF THE TLIS

No.	Task characteristics	Length
BASIC		
TLI 1	To talk about perceptions about some illustrated actions in the textbook.	1 min 24 s
TLI 2	To discuss some actions and expressions heard from a listening activity.	5 min 20 s
TLI 3	To practice the use of suggestions and responses by using formulaic expressions.	7 min 20 s
TLI 4	To practice the use of suggestions and responses by using formulaic expressions and the verb 'take'.	5 min 13 s
TLI 5	To discuss past long journeys.	2 min 45 s
INTERMEDIATE		
TLI 1	To practice specific vocabulary related to relationships.	6 min 16 s
TLI 2	To discuss perceptions about types of relationships.	7 min 20 s
TLI 3	To discuss perceptions about the importance of certain personal relationships.	12 min 55 s
TLI 4	To discuss perceptions about certain relationships in other cultures.	5 min 21 s
ADVANCED		
TLI 1	To practice vocabulary related to skills.	1 min 50 s
TLI 2	To practice vocabulary related to sleeping habits.	5 min 40 s

APPENDIX II. INFORMATION SUMMARY OF THE LLIS

No.	Task characteristics	Length
BASIC		
LLI 1	To discuss and describe illustrated situations.	3 min 20 s
LLI 2	To talk about a long journey that happened in the past (personal information).	5 min 47 s
LLI 3	To discuss the importance of physical appearance.	2 min 53 s
LLI 4	To practice the use of suggestions according to some situations.	9 min 03 s
LLI 5		
LLI 6		
INTERMEDIATE		
LLI 1	To discuss and describe life stages and lifestyles provided as visual aid.	8 min 31 s
LLI 2		
LLI 3		
LLI 4	To discuss the advantages and disadvantages of some written situations (written aid).	13 min 02 s
LLI 5		
LLI 6		
ADVANCED		
LLI 1	To discuss, negotiate and agree on one image for an effective campaign.	11 min 42 s
LLI 2		
LLI 3		
LLI 4	To discuss skilful people that the learners know.	6 min 20 s
LLI 5		
LLI 6	To discuss sleeping habits (personal information).	6 min 20 s