Interaction and the Negotiation of Meaning


Signals of comprehension difficulty

- **Confirmation checks**: Moves by which one speaker seeks confirmation of the other’s preceding utterance through repetition, with rising intonation, of what was perceived to be all or part of the preceding utterance.

- **Clarification requests**: Moves by which one speaker seeks assistance in understanding the other speaker’s preceding utterance through questions, ... statements such as “I don’t understand,” or imperatives such as “Please repeat.”

- **Comprehension checks**: Moves by which one speaker attempts to determine whether the other speaker has understood a preceding message.

Examples of meaning negotiation

1

**Learner (NNS English)**

so you came here by yourself or did you come with friends?

no no I - what? what you say?  
(confirmation request)

did you come to the states with friends or did you come alone?

no, alone - from Toronto

2

**Learner (NNS English)**

High marks?  
(confimation check)

did you get high marks? Good grades?

Oh no in English yes em B

good grades A’s and B’s – did you get A in English?
Learner (NNS English)
excuse me?
(clarification request)

Mmhm

Interlocutor (NS English)
OK, he's dancing with the woman doctor

the the young man doctor is dancing with the woman doctor, right?
(comprehension check)

Learner (NNS English)
and they have the chwach there

the chwach - I know someone that

like um like American people they always go there every Sunday

you know - every morning that there pr- that-the American people get dressed up to go to um chwach

Interlocutor (NS English)
the what?
(clarification request)

what does it mean?
(clarification request)

yes?

Learner (NNS English)
like us three months ago that the SEPTA doft doft doft

Interlocutor (NS English)
dropped?
(confirmatory check)

no you lo- you you lend me I am you

Debts okay they debt million of dollars

Interlocutor (NS English)
oh owes – debt

oh yeah yeah
Learner (NNS English)
... so this young woman doctor hope this young man doctor drive car, go home ... now this young woman boyfriend very angry ... he want have a very no-good idea for this girl

can't speak girl. and why? because this this girl very angry also. you know what I mean? (comprehension check)

Interlocutor (NS English)

which girl? the one who can't speak? (clarification request)

Yes

Learner (NNS English)
I don't like because the people from that country - the mens and the womens - the men they think too much

my country say the people from there the many many times all time they say they are the last aysti in the Sahara

they say maybe another word in the Sahara understand? (comprehension check)

Interlocutor (NS English)

I've heard others say that also

the last aysti? aysti? (confirmation check)

I understand Sahara, but I don't understand aysti

Right I am the last

but what's aysti? (clarification request)

no no but they're the last aysti? (clarification check)

iced tea! I see

all right I see

ays:ti

or the or the the last very cold coke