Investigating the Empirical Aspects of Communication Strategies

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Uhm, Chul Joo. 2000. Investigating the Empirical Aspects of Communication Strategies. *Linguistics* 8-1, 353-377. This critical review on communication strategies (CS) characterizing the second language learners' communication problems will be concerned with some important empirical research that we should find useful when investigating the mechanism for processing that will explain how learners produce the utterances, and why they choose the solutions they do. Included are the summary of various typologies on which these empirical studies are based and the categorized review of the studies from reduction CS, compensatory CS and process approach perspectives. **(Chonnam National University)**

1. Introduction

How do we manage to communicate when we have limited command of a language? The problem is most apparent for adults trying to speak in a second or foreign language which they have not perfectly mastered. It is apparent in those cases because first, adults tend to make a great fuss about such limitations, and second, the disparity between what the adult might have said in a native language and what they manage to say in a second language is so striking.

Systematic study of this problem for second language learners has been carried out for about thirty years and comprises the sub-area of second-language acquisition research that has become known as communication strategies (hereafter, CS). However, most of the studies have been considered for defining and identifying CS. Although these works form the essential basis of the related research, we can draw a

conclusion that what is missing from the work covered in the traditional descriptive approaches is a mechanism for processing that will explain how learners produce these utterances, and why they choose the solutions they do (see Bialystok (1990)).

Therefore, this paper will be concerned with reviewing some empirical research of CS that we should find useful when investigating the processes of CS. Firstly, we summarize various typologies on which these empirical studies are based, and secondly, we critically review some major empirical research. Discussions on the pedagogical implications are also included.

2. Typologies

As CS definitions abound, so do various ways of organizing them. One of the earliest typologies belongs to Tarone, Cohen, and Dumas (1976):

- Transfer from the native language
- Overgeneralization
- Prefabricated pattern
- Overelaboration
- Epenthesis
- Avoidance
  - Topic avoidance
  - Semantic avoidance
  - Appeal to authority
  - Paraphrase
  - Message abandonment
  - Language switch

Before discussing their typology, their terms should be defined. In *transfer from the native language*, the authors mean negative transfer - which can be phonological, morphological, syntactical, or lexical (PMSL)

- from L1 that results in incorrect language in L2. They give the phonological example of /ʃip/ for /ʃIp/. *Overgeneralization*, which can also be PMSL, obliterates exceptions to the rule by indiscriminately applying an L2 rule to all similar situations. A morphological example would be *She drinked.* Although negative transfer comes from L1 and overgeneralization from L2, in actuality, they may be hard to distinguish or may even be combined. *Prefabricated patterns* refer to "regular, patterned segments of speech" used "without knowledge of their underlying structure, but with the knowledge as to which particular situations call for what patterns" (Hakuta 1976, p. 331). The authors mention Hakuta's *do-you* pattern of *What do you doing*? for *What are you doing*? Although similar to overgeneralization, prefabricated patterns differ in that the learner doesn't understand the syntactic feature's "underlying structure." The fourth communication strategy, *overelaboration*, is "stilted and inordinately formal" utterances which, although perhaps grammatically correct, are not the choice of native speakers, e.g., "*Buddy, that's my foot* WHICH *you're standing on*" (p. 9) In *epenthesis*, the learner inserts schwa vowels between the consonants of a cluster that he finds difficult to pronounce.

Avoidance subdivides into topic avoidance, semantic avoidance, appeal to authority, paraphrase, message abandonment, and language switch. In *topic avoidance*, the learner avoids talking about certain topics believed to use L2 structures or rules with which he is incompetent. *Semantic avoidance* occurs when the learner uses similar concept to replace those with unknown L2 rules or forms. In *appeal to authority*, the learner may consult a dictionary or another person for the correct form or rule, or ask if something is correct. *Paraphrase* rewords a "message in an alternate, acceptable, target language construction, in order to avoid a more difficult form or construction" (p. 10). An extended form of paraphrase, *circumlocution*, describes a lexical item. Also included in paraphrase is *word coinage*, the making up of a word in the target language for the unknown one (e.g., they cite *airball* for *balloon*). *Message abandonment* occurs when the learner begins talking

but upon meeting some difficulty abruptly stops. Finally, there is *language switch*, in which the learner transfers an L1 word or phrase into the target language untranslated.

As Tarone, Cohen, and Dumas (1983) remark, their early model is a working model. Although epenthesis, overelaboration, and prefabricated patterns may fit within their definition of CS, they really aren't CS because they don't attempt to overcome a breakdown in communication (Paribakht 1982). Additionally, paraphrase, appeal for assistance, and language switch may not necessarily avoid something more difficult, but, instead, may try to make up for a lack of TL knowledge: A learner cannot avoid what he doesn't know or, as Kleinmann (1990) puts it, "Avoidance presupposes choice" (p. 158). Tarone, perhaps coming to the same conclusion herself, later revised their typology in 1978 with some modification in 1981 as follows:

- Paraphrase
  - Approximation
  - Word coinage
  - Circumlocution
- Borrowing
  - Literal translation
  - Language switch
- Appeal for assistance
- Avoidance
  - Topic avoidance
  - Message abandonment
- Mime

Approximation uses words or structures which, though are not quite right, are close enough to the desired meaning to be understood (e.g., Tarone mentions *pipe* for *waterpipe*). In *mime*, the speaker uses nonverbal strategies to convey his/her meaning (e.g., clapping one's hands to indicate applause).

Tarone's new typology has changed radically from the old one. The categories of epenthesis, overelaboration, and prefabricated patterns have been dropped and a new nonlinguistic category, mime, has been picked up. Avoidance, having lost four subcategories, now has only two; three of those four lost ones are now in their own categories and seen positively instead of negatively: They try to communicate, not avoid communicating.

Moving on to other typologies, we note that the linguistic CS are gradually becoming grouped in two main ways: reduction vs. achievement and L1 vs. L2. The first grouping is also known as message adjustment and resource expansion strategies (Corder 1983). The former avoids risk by using only what the learner knows, and the latter expands the IL system to fulfill the communicative goal. Faerch & Kasper (1983) further divide reduction strategies into formal and functional reduction categories. In functional reduction strategies, the communicative goal is changed to avoid some difficulty. In formal reduction, however, the learner simplifies his speech to avoid mistakes or improve fluency - but the communicative goal remains the same. Faerch & Kasper's (1983) typology follows:

Formal reduction strategies:
- phonological
- morphological
- syntactical
- lexical

Functional reduction strategies:
- topic avoidance
- message abandonment
- meaning replacement

Achievement strategies:
- compensatory strategies
  - code switching

interlingual transfer
inter-/intralingual transfer
IL based strategies
generalization
paraphrase
word coinage
restructuring
cooperative strategies
non-linguistic strategies
retrieval strategies

Let's look at those terms that haven't been defined elsewhere. *Code switching* equates to *language switch*, and *interlingual transfer* to *transfer from the NL*. The latter includes *literal translation* and *foreignizing*, in which the lexical item is adapted to the IL phonology and/or morphology. *Inter-/intralingual transfer* "is a generalization of an IL rule . . . influenced by the properties of the corresponding L1 structures" (p. 94). For example, the authors point out that Danish 'svomme-svommede' (regular past tense) may result in English 'swim-swimmed' instead of 'swim-swam.' *Generalization* solves problems by 'filling the 'gaps' . . . with IL items they would not normally use in such contexts" (p. 46). In *restructuring*, the learner starts a message, but upon realizing he can't complete it, finishes it with an alternate message without any reduction. *Cooperative strategies* are the same as *appeal for assistance*; *non-linguistics strategies* correlate to mime. In *retrieval strategies*, the learner realizes that he doesn't possess the required term or structure in the IL and tries to retrieve it through achievement strategies.

Bialystok's (1990) typology, which also includes a third, nonlinguistic category, represents an L1 vs. L2 grouping - which interestingly consists of only compensatory strategies.

L1-Based Strategies

Language switch
Foreignizing
Transliteration
L2-Based Strategies
Semantic contiguity
Description
Word coinage
Nonlinguistic Strategies

Bialystok & Frohlich (1983) define *semantic contiguity* as using "a single lexical item which shares certain semantic features with the target item" (p. 11), whereas *transliteration* equates to literal translation.

The differences between all of these CS may not be as clearcut as scholars in the field seem to make it. Palmberg (1982) conducted a study to see how much non-native speakers of English concur when judging a particular CS to be either achievement or reduction, and whether they thought native speakers would conclude the strategy's optimal meaning. Organizing CS into five groups (avoidance, paraphrase, borrowing, appeal for assistance, and mime), he found that non-native speakers agreed on the strategy type 65% of the time and on the strategy's success 57% of the time-not exactly an overwhelming majority.

Besides lack of clearness, CS can also be difficult to identify because they may be unmarked (Willems 1987). For instance, without asking a speaker, it is hard to tell whether s/he is avoiding a topic or substituting one known word for an unknown one.

Despite these difficulties, typologies have multiplied fast. Tarone (1981) notes that different researchers use various methodologies that result in new CS being uncovered and new ways of typing CS. She hopes that, with time and more data, "we should be able to arrive at a composite typology that would contain all the CS used in all the studies, no matter what the methodology" (p. 82).

To meet that hope, some researchers (e.g., Kellerman, Bongaerts, and

Poulisse (1987)) have begun to use a process-oriented approach to typing CS. Presently, they are working only with compensatory strategies and usually divide them into two main categories with two subcategories each:

Conceptual
  Holistic
  Analytic
Linguistic
  Morphological creativity
  Transfer

Holistic strategies are basically the same as *semantic contiguity*, though they are not limited to a single lexical item. Kellerman, Bongaerts, and Poulisse (1987) call them *approximative* strategies and note that in a product typology they are referred to as *approximation*, *generalization*, or *exemplification*. In *analytical strategies* (which may be compared to the product categories of circumlocution or description), "one or more of the conceptual/functional/perceptual attributes of the desired target are made explicit" (Kellerman, Bongaerts, and Poulisse 1987, p. 106). In linguistic strategies, the language learner solves a communication problem by using his/her native language or some other language besides the target language and "relies on presupposed shared linguistic knowledge on the part of the listener . . . They have been referred to in the literature as Borrowing, Foreignization and Transliteration" (pp. 106-07). Generally speaking, conceptual and linguistic strategies seem to be the same as L2 and L1 strategies respectively with an emphasis on the process rather than the product.

3. Empirical Studies

Different formats of the above typologies undergird the empirical

studies. We shall look first at reduction CS, then compensatory strategies generally from an L1 vs. L2 approach, and finally the latter strategies from a process-oriented approach.

3.1. Reduction CS

Learners may reduce their language in order to "avoid making errors and/or ... increase their fluency"[1] (Faerch and Kasper 1983, p. 40). They may avoid mistakes simply to escape embarrassment or may assume that correct language is necessary to be understood (Rost 1996). Avoidance, as a communication strategy, however, is problematic: How does one attempt to communicate by avoiding communicating? Regardless, whether a learner doesn't use a certain linguistic structure because he is truly avoiding it or because he simply doesn't know it is hard to discern.

This difficulty in detecting true avoidance leads Kleinmann (1990) to assert that much which had been labelled avoidance in the past was only apparent, not true avoidance. To overcome this problem, he used two tests: (1) an indirect preference test to check for true avoidance behavior and (2) a multiple choice comprehension test (on passive, infinitive complement, and present progressive) to ensure that the subjects knew the particular forms to be elicited. (He didn't check for indirect object because intermediate students should know it.) He found that "avoidance operates as a group phenomenon. However, within a particular group use of the generally avoided structure is a function of various affective variables ... [such as] anxiety, confidence, and risk taking" (p. 165).

Besides merely avoiding errors, reduction (or meaning replacement)

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1) No empirical studies seem to have been conducted on reduction increasing fluency; yet Faerch and Kasper (1983), along with Tarone and Varadi (1985), mention the possibility. For example, Varadi (1980) notes that Hungarian waiters, eliminating both nominal and verbal inflections, may say, "Keit sultcsirke rendel lit" (two fried chicken order) (p. 63).

CS enable a language learner to reach a communicative goal despite lack of TL knowledge by adjusting his meaning to his encoding capabilities (Varadi 1980). Investigating this adjustment, Varadi (1980) conducted a pilot study consisting of two groups of nine and ten adults (both groups had studied English sixteen hours a week - one group for nine months, and the other for six). In the study, the subjects described a related series of drawings in a written format. One group had forty-five minutes to do so in English, and other had thirty minutes in Hungarian. After finishing, each group described it in the other language.

In general, his study substantiated that reduction (sacrificing the optimal meaning) did occur. The English sentences, when compared to the corresponding Hungarian ones, were extremely simple: They lacked transitional phrases and causality; the only relationship between sentences was a positional chronology.

Blum-Kulka & Levenston (1983) concentrate on another form of reduction, lexical simplification, that is, "making do with less words" (p. 119). They posit that lexical simplification, since it plays a part in a considerable number of linguistic contexts (e.g., L1 acquisition, foreigner talk, pidgins, translation, etc.), works on universal principles related to the individual's semantic competence in his/her native language. If true, perhaps all CS work on universal principles.

Therefore, reduction seems to operate at both group and individual levels: Individuals, due to various affective variables, may differ from group tendencies. They reduce their language in order to avoid making mistakes by "making do with less words," by dropping transitional phrases and casuality, or by avoiding the topic altogether.

3. 2. Compensatory CS

Focusing on compensatory strategies, Haastrup and Phillipson (1983) ask if some strategies are better than others and if strategy use is related to the learner's school background and academic goals.

As to their first question, while L1-based strategies usually resulted in either partial or non-comprehension, IL-based (basically the same as Bialystok & Frohlich's (1980) L2-based) strategies, paraphrase was used by all learners-some regularly, others less. Only a few employed generalization, word coinage, and restructuring. Although the IL-based strategies were more effective than L1-based strategies, their lack of use precluded comparing their effectiveness with respect to each other.

On the second question, the authors found that school background and academic goals seemed not to affect the strategies chosen; rather, "there are as many styles as there are individuals" (p. 156).

In contrast, Labarca & Khanji (1986) found that instructional background does affect the strategies chosen and also communicative effectiveness. In their study, two University of Delaware classes (30 students in one and 23 in the other) were taught first-semester French by one instructor who used a Strategic Interaction (SI) framework in the large class and a Total Physical Response (TPR) framework in the smaller one. TPR "focuses on the acquisition of the target language structure through physically reacting to oral commands given by the instructor," while SI

> stresses acquisition and development of interactional skills by introducing problem situations or conflicts for whose solution groups of students develop scripts, which are later acted out for the rest of the class and analyzed with a focus on communicative effectiveness. (pp. 70-71)

After twelve weeks of instruction, the students were interviewed and videotaped for 10-15 minutes. Those students taught under the SI method used CS less than those under the TPR method and, at the same time, were higher in linguistic competence: CS usage decreased as linguistic competence increased. These findings led the authors to conclude that CS shouldn't be taught because "communicative ability emerges precisely when students make less use of CS, rather than

when they learn how to use them" (p. 78).

As SI teaching affects target language (TL) knowledge, so TL knowledge affects CS usage. More precisely, TL skill affects both the type of CS and the relative frequency of the different CS types used (Paribakht 1985).

A study with two groups of 20 Persian ESL students (one intermediate group and one advanced) and one control group of 20 native speakers, divulged that the more advanced the learner, the more s/he used L2-based strategies rather than L1-based (Paribakht 1985). For example, the intermediate group used both *idiomatic transfer* and *transliteration of TL idioms and proverbs* while the advanced group used only the latter. Also, only the advanced group and native speakers used *transliteration of TL idioms and proverbs*.

Looking at the relative frequency of CS, the natives and the advanced group used the linguistic approach (semantic features of words) more than the intermediate group; the non-native groups used mime more than the intermediate group; the non-native groups used mime more than the natives; and the intermediates used the conceptual approach more than the other two. No significant differences surfaced between the groups in using the contextual approach. Since the strategies used by advanced learners seem to be midway between those used by the intermediate and native speakers, their usage is in a transition corresponding to the state of the learner's interlanguage. In other words, as learners progress towards the L2, the CS that they use and the proportion in which they use them changes.

In another study, Bialystok (1983) asks, "*Who* uses *which* strategy, *when*, and with *what* effect?" (p. 103). To answer that question, she designed a test in which a non-native speaker describes a 25×35 cm color illustration to a native speaker who then reconstructs the non-native's description with cardboard cut-out objects on a flannelboard. Included in the cut-out objects were incorrect distractor items as well as the correct ones.

The study had two French-learning groups: sixteen grade 12 students

in high school (who for some analyses were further divided into two subgroups of ten regular students and six advanced ones) and fourteen adults in a Civil Service French Language Training Program). The adults, on the whole, were ahead of the students in their studies.

In her study, though the more proficient learners tended to select L2-based CS, which strategies they'll use and when can't be predicted. Still, the best strategies are L2-based ones that consider the particular concept to be conveyed, and the best strategy users have "adequate formal proficiency" (p. 116) and the flexibility to vary the strategy according to the target concept. Since all of the best responses came from five speakers who "spoke at least three languages and had traveled extensively" (p. 116), strategy ability is linked to language experience.

The previous studies probes native speaker/non-native speaker (NS-NNS) interaction. Tarone and Yule (1987) conduct the first study in CS studies scrutinizing non-native speaker/non-native speaker (NNS-NNS) interaction[2] and ask three questions:

(1) What sorts of communication strategies are used by NNS of English from different NL backgrounds in order to describe an object, provide instructions for a series of actions, or narrate a sequence of events?
(2) Do these communication strategies vary depending on the NL and cultural background of the interlocutor?
(3) In what ways does this communication in English by NNS differ from that typically produced by NS of English performing the same tasks? (p. 53)

In their study, 12 Spanish speakers from South America interacted with 12 Asian-language speakers (6 Japanese, 5 Koreans, and 4

2) Varonis and Gass (1985) have conducted a study on NNS-NNS interaction that focused on the negotiation of meaning in a closely related field, foreigner talk.

Chinese). Additionally, they observed 9 native English speakers who performed the same tasks (there were "four objects to describe, one series of operations to be carried out and one set of events" (p. 53)). Paring one South American with one Asian, one subject would describe what appeared on a video screen, while the other - who only listened and didn't interrupt - chose from a set of three photographs what the speaker was depicting. After finishing each task, the two subjects changed places and repeated the experiment until all exercises were completed.

They found that the participants used several CS mentioned in previous NS-NNS studies: circumlocution, approximation, message abandonment, topic avoidance, mime, and literal translation. The use of literal translation was surprising, but they surmise that since Spanish and English are closely related, the subject may have hoped to hit upon a cognate. Two CS that didn't occur in the NNS-NNS interactions - thus differing from previous NS-NNS studies- were language switch and appeal to authority. Of course, language switch wasn't a feasible strategy since the subject didn't know his partner's native language. As for appeal to authority, they state that "a NS listener can reasonably be appealed to for assistance; a NNS listener who speaks a different NL from the speaker cannot" (p. 57). It's not clear, though, how an appeal to authority could be made in their study when "the only feedback which the listener could provide the speaker was non-verbal" (p. 54).

Besides the lack of appeal to authority, NNS-NNS interaction also illustrated three new aspects of CS:[3] repetition, explication, and over-explicitness.[4] Repetition, of course, may simply be a stalling

3) Other studies have mentioned these particular aspects. For example, Long (1983) points out that "self-repetitions are pervasive in NS-NNS conversation and . . . include partial or complete, and exact or semantic repetition (i.e. paraphrase)" (p. 138).

4) Repetition doesn't seem to fit into Tarone's criterion 3b of communication strategies: There's no "attempt [at] alternative means to communicate meaning ×" (p. 288).

technique while the speaker tries to plan his/her discourse. The authors posit, however, that it operates sometimes as a communication strategy, that is, it gives the listener "another chance to hear and process the information" (p. 57). Ulichny (1996) states that repeating a noun was more effective in NS-NNS communication than not repeating it. A third type of repetition, which is similar to approximation, occurs when a speaker uses two words to explain one concept and so gives the listener an extra opportunity to understand the message. Consider the following examples from Tarone and Yule (1987):

she looks the her clock, her watch
put her bag, her suitcase
two piece of sheet, two paper
his schoolmate, eh classmate (pp. 58-59)

In explication, which resembles the last form of repetition, the learner says a word and then describes the concept it represents. The authors present for an example, "second picture is, uh, st, triangle - striangle has three sides" (p. 59). Over-explicitness refers to the use by NNS (when compared to NS) of "additional descriptive detail" (p. 61) and redundant information. For instance, a typical NS comment such as "a student walks in and sits down in the front row" (p. 60) might be phrased by a NNS as "another woman, her hair is blonde, come into the classroom and sit in the front row at the center" (p. 60).

To sum up then from a product approach, NNS-NNS interaction differs slightly from NS-NNS interaction: There's an absence of language switch and appeal to authority, but a greater amount of detail and redundancy in NNS-NNS speech. As for NS-NNS studies, language experience along with the amount of TL knowledge and the instructional form (at least SI when compared to TPR) affects both the type and the frequency of CS. And so, as a learner advances towards the TL, s/he uses less effective L1-based CS less and more effective L2-based strategies more until reaching a certain level of proficiency.

Then, drawing nearer and nearer to native fluency, s/he begins to use all CS less and less.

3. 3. Process Approach

Moving to a process approach, Poulisse (1987) postulates that the proficiency level of the learners and the task influences CS usage. Forty-five native Dutch speakers (15 second-year university students of English and 30 secondary school pupils, of which 15 had studied for four years and 15 for two years in school) in the Nijmegen projects performed four different tasks:

> I) to name or describe 20 pictures of concrete objects for which they did not know the English names, in such a way that a native speaker of English who would later listen to the tape would be able to identify them;
> II) the same as task I, but this time 12 abstract figures had to be described (both in Dutch and in English);
> III) to retell in English four one-minute stories told to them in Dutch;
> IV) to have a 20-minute oral interview with a native speaker of English. (p. 149)

In her study, the subjects employed various strategies and give different amounts of information according to the task. In Tasks I and II above, "detailed information" (p. 149) was necessary in order to ensure selection of the correct picture, while in Tasks III and IV, it wasn't, and so the participants could "leave out information which they did not consider directly relevant, or which demanded too much effort" (p. 149). Thus the strategies used in Tasks I and II were mainly *analytic*, while *holistic* and *linguistic* strategies dominated in Tasks III and IV.

Poulisse also determined that less able learners used more strategies

due to their more limited vocabulary - especially more strategies embedded within other strategies because they "encounter[ed] new lexical problems while describing the features of the first problematic concept" (p. 150). When embedding strategies, the language learners preferred to use *holistic* and *linguistic* strategies.

Not only do language learners use different strategies depending upon the task, they do so in a hierarchical manner. Bongaerts & Poulisse (1989), also using information from the Nijmegen project, concluded that the subjects, like native speakers, "tended to stick to a perspective, once reference had been established" (p. 257) and preferred holistic strategies to analytical ones (Bialystok & Kellerman (1987) concur). Other researchers using data from the Nijmegen project have commented that the strategies are hierarchical (Kellerman, Ammerlaan, Bongaerts, and Poulisse 1990; Dornyei 1995): Holistic strategies are most preferred, then partitive, then linear (the last two are subdivisions of analytical strategies).

4. Pedagogical Implication

Research in CS can help both teachers and students. For teachers, recognizing the strategies that students are using may help them evaluate the students' progress in acquiring the TL: The more L2-based strategies the learner uses in comparison to L1-based ones, the more advanced s/he is. Gradually, as Ellis (1984) notes, most CS will be phased out as the student approaches native fluency. Also, recognizing avoidance strategies can help pinpoint problems a learner may be having with the target language instead of assuming that no error means no problem (Gilfert & Croker 1999). As Kleinmann (1978) notes,

> Sometimes, what a student does not say and write is as indicative of his progress in the TL as what he does say and write . . . Our effectiveness in teaching a second language, consequently, depends

> partly on our recognizing and dealing with the phenomenon of avoidance. (p. 166)

Obviously, those students who use communication strategies successfully will communicate better, and some researchers have suggested that teaching CS may help language learners to become more proficient. Yet Swan (1985) feels that since language learners use communication strategies in their mother tongue, they already have the strategic competence to do so in the target language - they simply lack the necessary words and grammar (cf. also Bongaerts, Kellerman, and Bentlage, 1989). In fact, Bialystok and Kellerman (1987) state that no studies have succeeded in teaching poor students communication strategies and so conclude that "what learners need is not specific teaching in strategies, but the opportunities to use strategies in situations which have real communicative value" (p. 172-73).

5. Suggestions for Future Research

Presently, too much is assumed and too little researched. Perhaps that should be expected due to the field's newness. Regardless, to see the whole picture, many more empirical studies are needed to flesh out the framework of CS. For instance, reduction is believed to increase fluency (Faerch & Kasper 1983; Varadi 1980); yet the only evidence is anecdotal. And though receptive strategies have been mentioned (e.g., Bialystok's (1990) inferencing), most empirical work has been done on productive strategies. Looking at productive strategies only is akin to seeing the bare chassis of a vehicle.

In filling out the CS framework, a hierarchy of CS effectiveness should be set up. Presently, process approach typologies posit that holistic strategies are better than analytical one, while product approaches generalize that L2-based CS are better than L1-based CS (Haastrup & Phillipson (1983) suggest that paraphrase may be the most effective). Along these lines, non-native speakers and native speakers

should be compared to ascertain effectiveness, remembering that even native speakers vary in their abilities (Tarone & Yule 1990). In fact, the same speakers should solve the same task in both native and learner languages "to determine what is an attempt to solve the referential problem, and what is a strategy compensating for a lexical gap" (Kellerman, Bongaerts, & Poulisse 1987, p. 108).

Hopefully, the hierarchy, once set up, can be correlated with the learner's transition states towards the TL. Such a correlation would give us another tool for evaluating the progress of foreign language learners. Even if not, we need to know what effect, if any, CS have on learning languages (Faerch 1984; Selinker 1984), and what relationship exists between CS and communicative competence (Littlewood 1981; Onoufriou 1984; Willems 1987). Presently, no research has been done in this area.

One promising research area is the venture into the cognitive processes underlying communication strategies and the corresponding tying of communication strategies into existing L1 research, language acquisition, cognitive psychology, problem-solving, etc. After all, it is rather foolish to reinvent the wheel. We must, however, be careful that the phenomena are the same and not simply name "different phenomena similarly" (Faerch 1984, p. 69). Presently, all the work from a process approach has been with compensatory strategies - none with retrieval or reduction strategies. The cognitive processes underlying these latter two also need to be ferreted out.

From variables affecting CS usage have been studied in depth. Faerch (1984) comments that little research has delved into such factors as the learner's age, personality, knowledge of other languages, or previous L2 exposure before formal study (however, Bialystok & Kellerman (1987) believe such factors don't affect CS). Tarone (1981) sees proficiency level as a determining variable while Paribakht & Bialystok (1983) call it an intervening variable. Research should clear up this discrepancy (Onofriou 1984). The few studies done on academic background and goals (Haastrup & Phillipson 1983) and instructional

format (Labarca & Khanji 1986) seem to conflict on whether the classroom setting affects the CS chosen and progress in communicative effectiveness. Most investigation has been conducted in a restricted classroom environment. Yet, "language use in the classroom is quite different" (Seliger 1983, p. 250) from that on the street. Consequently, research must also be done on the street or at least be "sociofunctionally real and important to the learners under study" (Selinker 1984, p. 341), to determine whether our speakers are being limited to using a "screwdriver as a chisel." And finally, all but two studies to date (Tarone & Yule 1987; Varonis & Gass 1985) have dealt with native/non-native interaction. Much more needs to be researched in this area. For instance, Tarone & Yule (1987) ask if non-native speakers from different language backgrounds use communication strategies differently and if non-native/non-native interaction differs from that of native/non-native.

6. Conclusion

Though as old as language itself, CS have only recently, with the advent of interlanguage studies (Selinker 1972), begun to be studied. The field's infancy has generated confusion. Different definitions and typologies clutter the literature. Of the definitions to date, Tarone has significantly contributed by clearly distinguishing between CS, PS, and LS, and by emphasizing that interaction is the discriminating factor between CS and PS. Yet Faerch and Kasper (1980) rightly note that one speaker may solve his communication problem on his own without involving the other speaker. To overcome this objection, Tarone (1981) should include in her criteria *mental* "alternative means to communicate meaning x" (p. 288). Even if a speaker doesn't include the other person, s/he assumes that the solution is understandable to the listener and so has "shared meaning." Otherwise, s/he hasn't solved his/her communication plight. Thus interaction is a necessary feature of CS. And so is Tarone's (1981) motivation factor in order to distinguish

between CS and LS - despite the difficulty in being able to do so. As Bialystok (1983) notes, "any strategy may potentially operate as either a learning or a communication strategy: ideally the implementation of a strategy leaves a positive mark on both learning and communication" (p. 102). Consequently, only motivation separates CS and LS.

The field's confusion stems not only from the lack of a common definition, but also from the absence of an all-encompassing typology. This is partly due to the methods of collecting data. Different methods elicit different CS, different definitions, and different terms for the same item (such as Tarone's (1981) production strategies and Faerch & Kasper's (1983) formal reduction strategies) - all of which makes cross-study comparisons more difficult. Also, Scholfield (1987) notes that perhaps the

> method of eliciting CS in effect only elicits cooperative-like CS. The main problem is that any imposed restriction on the range of CS available to the learner may alter his usage of the ones he is left with. To take an analogy, if we set a carpenter to build a cabinet and observe the use he makes of his various tools, we will get a rather warped picture if we at the same time deprive him of half his toolkit. We may, for instance, observe him trying to use a screwdriver as a chisel.

In dispelling the confusion, the present trend towards a process approach sounds a hopeful note. If all strategies derive from a few underlying cognitive processes, then regardless of the methodology and/or terminology, these processes should account for all elicited strategies, and so would finally establish an all-encompassing typology.

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