Strategies in Interlanguage Production: From the Point of View of Communication Strategies

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It is well-known that second language learners often utilize strategies in communication with the language. But the study of communication strategies is so diverse that its whole picture is hard to understand. This article presents a new kind of explanatory orientation to the strategies, emphasizing the process-oriented aspect. In other words, communication strategies will be described within the framework of general speech production model with a distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge. In addition, it is claimed that at each level of speech production planning, IL speakers vary in the use of linguistic knowledge according to whether or not their attention is devoted to linguistic form. In this article, I will identify four basic types of planning processes underlying communication strategy, and analyze some characteristic features of each process.

1. Introduction

Foreign language learners are often faced with problems in communication with native speakers of the language, which causes a breakdown. It is sometimes because the learners lack the linguistic knowledge necessary to convey their intentions. It is sometimes because they cannot produce some expressions appropriate to particular situations due to cultural differences. In these cases, they resort to some strategies to solve the communication problems. These strategies are called 'communication strategies'.

Communication strategy has been studied for fifteen years. The state of the art is confused, because different researchers have proposed different kinds of concepts and taxonomies. Hence, by introducing a new perspective of distinguishing declarative knowledge from procedural in cognitive psychology and incorporating a speech production model, I will attempt to present a new idea of communication strategy.
2. Summary of previous studies and criticisms

(1) Typical definitions and taxonomies

According to Corder (1983), “a working definition of communication strategies is that they are a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his meaning when faced with some difficulty” (1983:16). Tarone (1980, 1983) defines communication strategy “as a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared” (1980:419). These researchers confine their aims to the description of observable utterances and nonverbal behaviours in the interactions.

Færch and Kasper (1983), however, try to analyze communication strategies at the level of psycholinguistic process of language use, and define them as “potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal” (1983b:36).

Færch and Kasper's perspective is concerned with an attempt at explaining the process of communication strategy. It covers not only results of communication strategies emerging on the surface utterances, but also planning processes which result in pauses, self-repairs or slips. In this respect, it can be said that Færch and Kasper's perspective is more appropriate to describe communication strategies where 'process' should essentially be a central part.

A summary of taxonomies by these authors can be found in Hirano (1987).

(2) Criticism by Kellerman et al. (1987)

Kellerman et al. (1987) point out some weaknesses involved in most of these taxonomies proposed so far. First, they demonstrate that it is hard to delimit such strategies as, for example, approximation, generalization and paraphrase. Furthermore, criteria of such classification are dependent on the description at the linguistic product level.

According to their process-oriented perspective, they propose their own taxonomy, concentrating on 'Compensatory strategies', which are typically employed as ad hoc strategies to compensate for lack of linguistic knowledge without sacrificing the whole of intended meaning by the learner. The taxonomy includes only three components as follows:

(a) Approximation strategies; which are holistic, involving the use of an alternative lexical item for a missing one (e.g. 'bird' for 'robin'). Their outcomes are called 'approximations'.

(b) Analytic strategies; which are partitive, involving some form of decompositional analysis of the referent in terms of its conceptual, functional or perceptual attribute. Their outcomes are called 'analytic description'.
(c)Linguistic (or interlingual) strategies; which involve recourse to the learner’s first language in some way (by ‘borrowing’, ‘foreignizing’ and ‘transliteration’). (1987: 70, 105-107)

(3)Aim of this study

In spite of their process-oriented approach, Kellerman et al. do not fully deal with how communication problems can be solved by utilizing communication strategies, that is, they cannot explain how communication strategies are internally formed and how they result in the linguistic products of the utterances.

From a cognitive viewpoint, Faerch and Kasper (1986) effectively explain the production process of transfer from the mother tongue as a realization of production procedure, by introducing the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge, and the concept of automatization of linguistic knowledge. This study attempts to describe how communication strategies occur, applying the notion of declarative and procedural knowledge to the domain of communication strategy in general as well as to that of transfer, on the basis of a speech production model.

3. General model of speech production

Clark and Clark’s model(1977) shown in Figure 1 is adopted, since communication strategies are assumed to occur at each level of the planning of the speech production.

![Speech Production Model](image)

**Figure 1** A Speech Production Model (Based on Clark and Clark 1977)

Goal formation means that the speaker establishes the communicative intentions he or she wants to realize at a time of a discourse, assessing all aspects relevant to the
situation.

At the level of discourse plans, the kind of discourse is decided. Discourse structure, such as the beginning and closing of discourse, and ways of conveying information, is designed here.

The next level of sentence plans involves decisions in three categories, namely, propositional content, illocutionary content and thematic structure.

The final part of the planning phase is composed of constituent plans. Once a sentence plan is completed, the speaker begins the articulatory program, following each level of constituent plans.

At each level of the articulatory program, the following are decided: (1) meaning selection, which assigns the meaning a constituent is to have; (2) selection of a syntactic outline, which specifies a succession of word slots, connection among words, and location of stresses and so forth; (3) content word selection, which is to select nouns, verbs and adjectives to fit into the appropriate slots; (4) affix and function word formation, which is to decide on function words, prefixes and suffixes that are distributed within the constituent; (5) specification of phonetic segments, which is to build up plans for actual pronunciation on the basis of the plans already constructed (278-279).

At the final level of the speech production, utterances are actually produced, using the articulatory organs.

4. Declarative knowledge and Procedural knowledge

Another key concept of the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge has been worked out in the field of cognitive psychology. Their characteristic features are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Features of Declarative and Procedural Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Declarative knowledge</th>
<th>Procedural knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. possessed in an all-or-none manner</td>
<td>1. partially possessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. acquired suddenly</td>
<td>2. acquired gradually, by performing the skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. communicated verbally</td>
<td>3. not communicated verbally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Möhle and Raupach 1989:198)

With the distinction applied to second language acquisition research, declarative knowledge is “a language user's underlying knowledge about linguistic structure” (Faerch and Kasper 1986:50) and procedural knowledge is “the sum of procedures operating on an individual’s declarative knowledge in the performance of mental or behavioural acts”. It is also claimed that the former knowledge “cannot be employed
immediately but only through procedures activating relevant parts of declarative knowledge in speech reception and production” (Færch and Kasper 1986:51). One important aspect of procedural knowledge is that it gradually gets automatized by practice. It can be said, therefore, that while procedural knowledge of the first language is completely automatized, a considerable part of that of interlanguage may not be fully automatized.

5. Occurrence of communication strategy

By adopting the production model and the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge discussed in the previous section, a new perspective of the explanation of communication strategies can be gained. For this purpose, three basic points should be presented in advance.

(1) Planning process and occurrence of communication strategy

(a) There is a possibility that communication strategies come into play at each level of plans.
(b) In interlanguage (IL) communication, the IL speaker firstly relies on IL procedural knowledge in order to utilize rules and items necessary to realize the communicative goal, but if the speaker cannot make that work, he or she may try to use other IL procedural knowledge immediately available and if that fails, he or she turns to IL declarative knowledge. When the learner cannot utilize even this, he or she selects linguistic rules and items from the first language (L1) declarative knowledge and combines them with IL procedural knowledge in some cases, or in other cases he or she utilizes L1 procedural knowledge.
(c) Two ways in which communication problems are met can be assumed. One is the case in which attention is devoted to linguistic form, and the structure necessary to realize the goal is felt to be insufficient. The other is when attention is not given to linguistic form, but to other communication problems in a social sense, such as the speaker’s need to respond quickly to his or her interlocutors, or to save face by means of fluent speaking.

(2) The case in which attention is devoted to problematic linguistic form.

(a) Discourse plans. At the level of discourse plans, if the IL speaker cannot utilize the IL procedural knowledge about discourse that he or she possesses at the moment, it is thought that he or she will employ other IL declarative knowledge or procedural knowledge. The literature on this possibility is scarce, however.
(b) Sentence plans. At the level of sentence plans, when the IL speaker does not know a means of conveying a certain illocutionary act, for example, an apology, it is assumed that he or she will either utilize another IL expression for the same purpose, or utilize an expression corresponding to the one in the L1 in a similar
situation. This may result in L1 transfer. Yet this case has been scarcely reported in the literature.

(c) Constituent plans. Communication strategies at each level of the articulatory program need to be analyzed in detail. However, the possibility that communication strategies even take place at the level of meaning selection is difficult to confirm. In fact there are very few examples in the literature.

Secondly, at the level of selection of a syntactic outline, we can assume two alternative solutions of the problem when the IL speaker cannot exploit the procedural knowledge about syntax which he or she has. One is to use other more available IL procedural knowledge. In other word, the speaker tries to use linguistic structures easier for him or her to manipulate. Consequently a product corresponding to so-called paraphrase emerges in the surface utterances. For instance, Schachter (1974) states that Japanese and Chinese students tend to use co-ordinate sentences, rather than relative clauses whose forms are different from their native languages.

The other solution is to select relevant parts of L1 declarative knowledge about structures and combine them with IL procedural knowledge. The anomaly of the resulting structure of this process is so apparent that it is liable to be avoided intuitively, hence, very few examples can be found in previous studies.

Thirdly, at the level of content word selection, when the speaker’s IL procedural knowledge of lexical items is not readily available, the following two options are conceivable. On the one hand, the speaker utilizes other more manageable procedural knowledge, using a superordinate term (generalization), using a hyponemic expression (exemplification), and explicating features and functions of the intended referent (circumlocution). In addition to these, the IL speaker sometimes constructs a new IL word (word coinage), for example, he or she uses *air ball* instead of *balloon* (Váradi 1983:93).

The other procedure for a solution activates L1 declarative knowledge about lexical items, and selects and combines elements with IL procedural knowledge. This results in the following three possibilities: the use of L1 pronunciation (borrowing), literal translation of the corresponding expressions into IL words (literal translation), or pronunciation of L1 words according to the phonological rules of the target languages (foreignizing).

At the fourth level of affix and function word formation, there also seems to be two kinds of solutions when the IL procedural knowledge cannot be used without difficulty. The first solution is to utilize IL procedural knowledge about other functors, for example, the IL speaker often uses inappropriate affixes and functors.

The other solution is the way in which L1 knowledge is used. The case in which
L1 declarative knowledge is utilized in its pure form cannot be seen in previous studies due to their characteristic features of semantic redundancy. However, we can notice the case that IL knowledge is combined with L1 declarative knowledge; for example, Danish learners of English use 'swimmned' for 'swam' on the basis of the rule of the inflective morpheme for the past tense in Danish (ad hoc overgeneralization) (Færch and Kasper 1983b:47).

At the final level of specification of phonetic segments, there are two kinds of phenomena on the surface when the plan at the higher-order level is built up on the basis of L1 knowledge; while borrowing will occur by utilizing L1 knowledge, foreignizing will occur by utilizing IL knowledge.

(3) The case in which attention is not devoted to problematic linguistic form.

There is the case in which the IL speaker pays very little attention to linguistic form. This is the case where he or she is faced with the situational urgency to talk to interlocutors immediately or to speak fluently. This is often motivated by a desire to save face. In this case, completely automatized L1 procedural knowledge is sometimes utilized in order to meet the emergency.

(a) Discourse plans. At the level of discourse plans, discourse structures such as manners of beginning and closing conversations are different among languages. If the speaker is not possessed of the necessary IL procedural knowledge instantaneously manipulable, there is a possibility of transferring corresponding L1 procedural knowledge about discourse. However, at this level, formal differences between the two languages are so difficult to perceive that few examples of this kind of transfer have been reported in previous studies.

(b) Sentence plans. At the level of sentence plans, if the IL speaker does not have any resources to convey a certain illocutionary act in IL communication, he or she is assumed to employ L1 procedural knowledge which is more available. In this case too there are very few reports in the literature.

(c) Constituent plans. Here again, we have to look at the individual level of the articulatory program. As mentioned in the previous section, at the level of meaning selection it may not be expected that communication strategies of this type will occur.

As to the level of selection of a syntactic outline, Möhle and Raupach (1989) suggest that if the speaker cannot utilize the IL procedural knowledge which is necessary to solve the problems of this kind, he or she would rely on their L1 procedural knowledge rather than other elements of IL procedural knowledge which have not yet been fully automatized (1989:207).

At the level of content word selection, L1 words themselves are occasionally introduced almost automatically into IL communication (borrowing; Færch and

At the level of affix and function word formation, use of L1 procedural knowledge tends to emerge depending on the morphological similarity between the two languages, since the speaker by nature pays little attention to affixes and functors.

6. Conclusion

(1)Summary

An outline of the discussion so far is presented in Figure 2 concerning the levels of...
selection of a syntactic outline, content word selection, and affix and function word formation. These levels are selected here because they are abundant in examples.

It may be said that the traditional concepts of communication strategy can be revised within the framework of Figure 2. We can point out that the classifications of communication strategy at the product-level do not take into account differences at the process-level; for example, it can be recognized that the surface phenomenon of borrowing can be different in internal route of process according to whether or not attention is directed to linguistic form.

To conclude, we may say that when attention is focused on linguistic form, three routes A, B and C in Figure 2 can be postulated. However many designations may be provided, there are essentially only these three types of internal processing routes. When attention is not focused on linguistic form, there is only one type.

(2) Criteria for classification

Focusing on the relationships between this kind of linguistic knowledge and planning process in Figure 2, each route can be presented as follows:

A. (IL declarative knowledge) → IL procedural knowledge
B. L1 declarative knowledge → IL procedural knowledge
C. L1 declarative knowledge → L1 procedural knowledge
D. L1 procedural knowledge → IL procedural knowledge

Their respective features can be summarized as in Table 2.

Table 2 Features of Four Types of Processing Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>linguistic source</th>
<th>±attention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>L2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>interlingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>interlingual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, each of the four types of processing route can be designated, as below:

A. attentional interlingual communication strategy
B. attentional crosslinguistic communication strategy
C. attentional L1 transfer communication strategy
D. non attentional crosslinguistic communication strategy

References

Corder, S. Pit. “Strategies of Communication”. 1978. in C. Færch and G. Kasper (eds.).


