1. Introduction

The primary purpose of this study is to propose potential criteria to estimate the effects of teaching communication strategies (CS) and discuss why these criteria are necessary. Whether or not CS training should be incorporated into a second language (L2) classroom is the most recent controversial issue in CS studies. Some researchers are, in fact, against teaching CS (TCS) in L2 classes; however, our real intention of this study is not to reject the pedagogical values of CS training. On the contrary, it is to seek stronger theoretical grounds to support the benefits of CS training. For this purpose, we try to point out some shortcomings of the past empirical CS studies which confirmed the teachability of CS and discuss what other empirical evidence needs to be added to compensate for their inadequacies.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Interpretation of teaching effects

| A: ... it's a big animal um .. it he has big big um [for a rhinoceros] |
| B: . thi .. they are cute animal .. used .. used in medical experience .. they are cute brown animal [for a guinea pig] |

Before getting into the main discussion, let us take a look at the two utterances above. They were produced by the same learner of English as a foreign language (EFL) at an interval of about a month, before and after an intensive self-training CS program. On its surface, the response B has more information bits (Ellis, 1984) than its counterpart, so optimistic TCS proponents (see further discussion below) may conclude that the program was effective. However, we argue in the rest of this study that this conclusion is too simplistic without credible linguistic evidence, or evidence related to L2 learner’s interlanguage, being offered.

A fundamental problem underlying the lack of linguistic evidence comes from the fact that there are no widely accepted criteria to determine the effects of teaching CS. Regarding this difficulty, Dörnyei (1995) argues that teaching effects can be interpreted either narrowly or broadly and that it would be more relevant to apply a broader interpretation to the evaluation of CS training (pp. 62-64). He has specifically listed six likely benefits of CS training, which include raising L2 learners’ awareness of CS use and increasing the learners’ willingness to take risks and to use strategies.
We have no objection to Dörnyei’s methods of evaluation from a broader pedagogical perspective. In fact, many CS studies including this particular study by Dörnyei have reported L2 learners’ motivational and participatory benefits (e.g., Hirano, 1992; Iwa, 1998).

In contrast to the broader interpretation of teaching, the narrower interpretation is still contentious with respect to the TCS issue. Thus, we would like to argue in this study that thorough discussions and investigations toward the effectiveness of TCS in the narrow sense are sine qua non for asserting the values of CS instruction. Our claim for this does not derive only from the fact that detractors of CS training depreciate pedagogical gains from performance-based practice (Kellerman, 1991; see below for a further discussion). Rather, we consider that essential and persuasive rationales would be overlooked if we do not insist on evaluating TCS within a narrower perspective of second language acquisition (SLA), that is, to what extent CS training can contribute to fostering L2 learners’ linguistic competence. Before discussing this further, let us review how the TCS issue was brought up in CS studies.

2.2 Controversial issues of past CS studies

Along the maturing stages of CS studies in the last two decades, there have been at least three main controversial theoretical issues raised in them: a taxonomic issue at an early stage, a product versus process issue at an interim stage, and a pedagogical issue at the most recent stage. All of these issues seem to be derived from CS researchers’ theoretical, or even epistemological, beliefs (see Iwai 2000 for a detailed review of these issues).

Regarding the pedagogical issue, Yule and Tarone (1997) refuted anti-TCS researchers, calling them the Cons against the Pros who were in favor of TCS. It is now well-known in CS studies that a teaching value of CS was unequivocally turned down by two CS researchers, Bialystok (1990) and Kellerman (1991, 1998), who represent researchers of the process-oriented CS group. Along with most other scholars in this group, they take it for granted that strategic competence is equipped already through L1 acquisition and, thus, unnecessary to teach CS formally (Dörnyei, 1995; Russell & Loschky, 1998). Furthermore, for the Cons teaching CS is of no practical use since they consider that it does not help learners alter their cognitive processing competence (Konishi & Tarone, forthcoming).

Against such demurring remarks is a promising assumption supported by product-oriented and/or pedagogically oriented CS researchers and practitioners, and recent evidence has shown that this assumption is a stronger theoretical claim than was intuitively expected at an early stage. For example, Tarone (1984) was initially speculative regarding TCS effects, stating that “such [CS] exercises do not claim to provide the sort of practice that will necessarily improve grammatical or sociolinguistic competence on the part of the learner” (p. 135). In her recent studies, however, she asserted its values with her colleague (Tarone & Yule, 1989; Yule & Tarone 1997) and indicated an important pedagogical possibility that “performance creates competence” (Yule & Tarone 1997: p. 29).

In the same vein, a majority of CS researchers expressed a similar fertile view of TCS. Its supporters include, just to mention a few, Dörnyei (1995), Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991), Konishi and Tarone (forthcoming), Liskin-Gasparro (1996), Salomone & Tarsal (1997), and Takatsuka (1996). Furthermore, Konishi and Tarone (forthcoming) consider that CS-based
instruction can provide meaningful communication opportunities and effective linguistic practice to develop L2 learners’ grammatical competence, placing a special emphasis on EFL contexts.

Referring to these pros’ and cons’ studies, Iwai (2001) argued that teaching effects of CS should not be accounted for only in strategic terms (p. 38). Any conclusion on the TCS issue is premature, he warns, until relevant linguistic evidence in terms of L2 learners’ linguistic competence is shown. To obtain demonstrable evidence, he stressed that at least three steps needed to be taken. The first step requires comprehensive examinations of how CS-based instruction is conducted in L2 classrooms and how well currently used teaching materials reflect the research outcomes of CS studies. On the basis of such examinations, he considers that teaching materials specifically oriented for CS training should be created at the second stage, which can be followed, at the final stage, by a systematic empirical study to measure teaching effects.

Up to this date, however, the authors are rather hesitant to say that these developmental steps have been satisfactorily taken by past empirical CS studies. To afford a bird’s-eye view of the past TCS studies, the next section summarizes some of these studies and their main findings.

2.3 Review of studies related to the TCS issue

2.3.1 Examination of teaching materials

Regarding the first step in the preceding section, we have been unsuccessful in finding any particular study which examined CS training practice longitudinally or comprehensively at, for example, a high school level or a college level. The reason for this would be either that the research outcomes of TCS studies have not yet been acknowledged enough by language teachers or that some critical evidence to argue for the pedagogical value of TCS is still missing to persuade those teachers. Judging from the fact that a large number of papers and books on CS studies have been published, we assume that the latter is the more plausible reason, part of which is also induced from the TCS studies on textbook analyses as discussed below.

In contrast to the lack of studies reporting actual CS training, we have found three contemporarily conducted studies on textbook analyses from CS perspectives. First, Iwai (2001) examined 21 English textbooks (published by seven different companies) for Japanese junior high-school students, and he found that almost no strategic exercises were given at either a lexical level (e.g., paraphrasing and approximation) or a discourse level (e.g., request for repetition and asking for clarification). Furthermore, the majority of exercises in these textbooks were highlighted to practice English resources by rote, regardless of the intended skill areas such as speaking and reading. The most implicational finding was the number of exercises to practice what learners want to say, which is the central concern for CS researchers. His investigation on this revealed that these meaning-oriented exercises consisted of less than 2% of the whole exercises in most of the textbooks examined (p. 37).

These findings from junior high-school textbooks are, however, not surprising at all once they are compared to Tatsukawa’s (2000) in-depth examination of 8 Japanese
high-school textbooks for Oral Communication A. On the basis of his findings, mainly from the analysis of interactive and discourse strategies, Tatsukawa (2000) concluded that “the examination outcomes are not satisfactory from the perspective of communication strategies” (p. 263: our translation).

In contrast to these two studies on Japanese EFL textbooks, Faucette (2001) chose English language teaching (ELT) materials published mainly by American or European publishers as her examination target. Excluding 23 textbooks with no explicit entry of CS, she examined 9 ELT textbooks and 8 teachers’ resource books, both of which are used widely and are likely to consist of sections related to strategic use of the language (p. 13). The analysis results were also disappointing for CS researchers because these ELT materials surveyed, especially textbooks, lacked effective CS activities (p. 27). It should also be noted that no adequate linguistic resources were offered, according to her, even in practice of, for example, lexical strategies.

2.3.2 Production of teaching materials and syllabus designing

The answer for the second step, i.e., production of teaching materials for CS, is rather obvious from the findings quoted in the proceeding section. One exceptional ELT material, which is a teachers’ resource book in above-quoted Faucette’s classification, would be Conversation and Dialogues in Action by Dörnyei and Thurrell (1992). This book introduces a large number of conversational routines and gambits (e.g., pause fillers); however, it is by no means clear to what extent these exercises based on formulaic patterns contribute to essential development of L2 learners’ interlanguage.

In contrast to such a general, wider approach to produce CS teaching materials, Konishi (2000), the second author of this study, stressed the necessity to produce them by scrutinizing native speakers’ (NS) productive norms. He examined, in this study, syntactic and semantic patterns of utterances, taking into account attributive features of 17 referential items that were described orally by 30 American NS of English. In this way, he revealed common expressional patterns (e.g., pre- and post-modifying structures) and most commonly used superordinate terms. These findings were compatible with his dictionary-based study (Konishi, 1994). To raise the reliability of Konishi’s (2000) study and to collect more fundamental data necessary to produce teaching materials for CS training, Iwai (2002) replicated Konishi’s study and collected CS data for 40 concrete and abstract items from 454 English NS in the world via the Internet. Similar syntactic and lexical features were also found in this study.

Through these studies, we have emphasized that teaching materials for CS-based instruction should be created on the basis of empirical evidence (Iwai, 2002) and that baseline data, including syntactic and lexical resources, should be offered to L2 learners (Konishi & Tarone, forthcoming). By doing so, we believe that we can clarify not only how L2 learners’ strategic competence (or awareness) is enhanced by CS training, but also to what extent linguistic items that would be necessary to make up for the learners’ linguistic deficits are learned. It is in this sense that we have been repeatedly saying that a SLA perspective should be incorporated into the TCS issue.
Contrary to the serious lack of systematic production of CS textbooks, syllabi for CS instruction have been designed by, for example, Dörnyei & Thurrell (1991, 1992), Hirano (1992), Takatsuka (1996), Ogane (1998), and Nishimura (2000) (also see Iwai, 2000 for a detailed review on CS syllabi). We do not think that syllabus designing alone can be a complete solution for the TCS issue, but unarguably these are indispensable preparations for that goal.

2.3.3 Empirical studies of CS training effects

Before advancing adequate procedural struggles for the first and second steps discussed so far, various studies to examine teaching effects of CS empirically have been conducted mostly within the last ten years. These studies include Chimbonda (2000), Dörnyei (1995), Iwa (1998), Kitajima (1997), Labarca & Khanji (1986), Liskin-Gasparro (1996), Russell & Loschky (1998), Salomone & Marsal (1997), and Senda (1996).

Of these studies, Russell and Loschky (1998) looked for what they called "recommended" and "non-recommended" strategies for L2 instruction rather than actual teaching effects. Analyzing questionnaire response data from Japanese college EFL learners, they argued that "we need to encourage our students to use those strategies which benefit language learning" (p. 111), and that CS training can be valuable when "(a) the strategies practiced in class are chosen for learning as well as communication value, and (b) the learners in question do not yet realize the value of using L2-based strategies" (ibid).

These concluding remarks by Russell and Loschky seem to be rather evident in themselves; however, it is not necessary so, especially regarding the first half of the condition (a) above since language learning mechanisms of CS training have been a secondary research interest and the effects of CS training have mostly been explained in strategic terms. That is, these studies have reported that CS training enables learners to be less frequent avoiders (e.g., Labarca & Khanji, 1986), to be more reckless risk takers (e.g., Kitajima, 1997), or to be more frequent and effective users of circumlocutions (paraphrasing or analytic strategies in some CS researchers' terminology) or approximations (e.g., Dörnyei, 1995; Iwa, 1998).

Our critical question against these affirmative outcomes is whether the training they offered in these studies were useful to build up L2 learners' linguistic competence itself. To clarify this question further, let us look at the next examples, which were also obtained from the same L2 learner before and after the CS training mentioned in Section 2.1.

| C: this is kind of insect . this have four ..... [for a ladybug] |
| D: this is a bird ... this have long foot .... this have .. nn long neck . this can't fly [for an ostrich] |

Both of these responses may be analyzed, in strategic terms, as the case of circumlocution or a combination of approximation ('insect' in C and 'a bird' in D) and circumlocution. If their definition quality (Dörnyei 1995) is scored, the post-training utterance D is likely to be evaluated higher since it consists of more attributes of the target items, thus easier to identify the intended item. But can we conclude from this evidence
alone that the CS training was effective?

The answer for this question may be positive if we take a communicate-to-learn perspective (Bruton 1999: p. 2), i.e., a pedagogical supposition that "learning evolves out of discourse constructed socially through the exchange of meanings/messages" (ibid). Ironically, however, we wonder if this supposition is true universally, even in a less socially constructed linguistic discourse as our EFL context being a typical example.

Furthermore, we wonder if we can estimate a true value of CS instruction appropriately without referring to recent theoretical and empirical debates on SLA. Referring to the utterances C and D above, this point may become clearer if we take a close look at their syntactic structures, grammatical accuracy, and lexical resources. We are not saying that these discussions are absolutely missing from all the empirical TCS studies quoted at the beginning of this section. On the contrary, Dörnyei (1995) attempted to grasp the change of speech rate occurring from the pre to the post stages of CS instruction, and Senda (1996) and Kitajima (1997) pointed out the possibility that CS training would not be productive to help learners acquire new linguistic knowledge, despite clear gains of effective communication skills. However, such attempts are rather minor or secondary in the past CS studies.

To sum up, TCS studies have revealed a lot concerning language use and production in a broader sense; however, they have not yet done so enough in terms of L2 learners' language acquisition in a narrower sense.

3. Unsolved Questions of the TCS Issue from a SLA Perspective

Acknowledging the pioneer efforts of these TCS researchers in the preceding section, we now would like to address three unsolved questions of the TCS issue below. All of them have been reiterated in applied linguistics, especially to argue merits and demerits of communicative language teaching (CLT), so they may be nothing new to readers. However, we consider that these theoretical CLT issues are also important for the application controversy of teaching CS and, thus, they should be integrated into empirical studies of TCS.

In addition, we would like to mention in advance that our suggestions below are made along the same lines as the theoretical standpoint discussed in Iwai and Konishi (2002). In this study, we argued that two terms, 'strategic competence' and 'communication strategies', had been used interchangeably in the past CS studies. As a result, several different types of strategies, such as strategies related to the lack of linguistic resources, to interactional discourse problems, and/or to pragmatic problems, were treated symmetrically without a serious attention being paid to their differences. To compensate for this theoretical inadequacy, we pointed out the necessity of distinguishing between these two terms and discussed the merits of applying the term 'communication strategies' only to language users' linguistic problems.

The first question that we would like to bring up here derives from a conventional but revived issue of a form versus meaning issue in CLT (e.g., Doughty & Williams, 1998; Murano, 2000). CS studies primarily concern with what a speaker intends to say, viz, meaning. Therefore, it is by no means clear what influence meaning-focused CS instruction gives on L2 learners' linguistic forms. We cannot say, unfortunately, that the past TCS
studies have answered this question adequately.

In an attempt to clarify the contributions of CS training to the form aspect of language, we consider that Skehan's (1996; also Foster & Skehan 1996) trichotomy of interlanguage shift, i.e., accuracy, fluency, and complexity, is worth adopting in TCS studies. Of these three, accuracy and complexity seem to be of great importance because we still know very little about the influence of CS instruction on them, even though past TCS studies show us that learners' fluency can be fostered remarkably by CS training (e.g., Dörnyei 1995).

The second question that we raise reflects a recent psycholinguistic dichotomy of declarative and procedural knowledge (de Bot, 1996; Marco, 1999; Multhaup, 1997; Robinson, 1989). Even if CS training has little to do with acquisition of new linguistic knowledge (see the preceding section for studies indicating this possibility), we should not forget to assess the procedural aspect of the knowledge. As college EFL practitioners, we often witness, in our English classes, learners who need impractically long processing time to produce even a short utterance. CS instruction may help them reduce processing time for language production, including pauses and hesitations. If this possibility is verified empirically, CS instruction can gain more supporting evidence. At the same time, this may need to be related to the issue of L2 learners' knowledge restructuring (Ellis, 1994; Johnson, 2001) and automatization brought by practice (Dekeyser, 1997; Robinson, 1997).

Our final indication is related to a series of general theoretical controversies in CLT. They include a debate on explicit versus implicit instruction (e.g., VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993), on input versus output hypotheses (e.g., Krashen, 1985; Swain, 1996), on assets of interaction or negotiation of meaning (e.g., Foster, 1998), and on effective tasks (e.g., Sheen, 1994; Yule, 1997). The TCS issue cannot be settled in isolation from these issues since it is directly related to every one of these theoretical and empirical issues of CLT.

4. Conclusion

With the craze for CLT in the last two or three decades, questions of the effectiveness of CLT on communication in L2 has drawn researchers' central attention. However, we know by now that excessive emphasis only on this aspect of language education potentially increases a danger of encouraging L2 learners to use fossilized expressions or classroom pidgin (Sheen, 1994).

In this study, we claimed that the pendulum of empirical TCS studies should not be swung only toward the direction of the communication per se. If we insist only on the communicate-to-learn aspect of CS instruction, Bialystok (1990) and Kellerman (1991) are probably correct since most adult L2 learners are already equipped with such strategic competence. Furthermore, we cannot say, in reality, that CS instruction has won all researchers' and practitioners' unanimous support as the results of CS studies on textbook analysis show (Section 2.3.1). One of the reasons for these unpleasant results for the proponents of CS instruction would be attributable to the fact that what L2 learners and teachers are zealous for is a method or material that is dually effective for communication and language acquisition. CS researchers should show empirical evidence for the questions raised in this paper before deciding on the effectiveness of TCS.
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Notes
1. These utterances were observed in our ongoing empirical CS study, in which oral data was collected from 78 Japanese college EFL learners in June and August, 2002, i.e., before and after an intensive CS training period. Each participant was requested to describe a picture image displayed on a computer monitor in given 15 seconds. A period in the transcription shows a pause of about a second.

2. We would like to thank Dr. Gabriele Kasper at University of Hawaii for providing us with the bibliographical information on this study.

3. In fact, our empirical CS training noted in 1 above was conducted by using a CS training material which we produced on the basis of these preliminary studies on NS norms. The produced material was named “ENGEL” (English Generative Learning), and we are hoping to report the details of this material soon.

4. It is not our purpose of this study to comment on each one of the recommended and non-recommended strategies; however, there is one recommended strategy that we cannot agree with the authors, namely, the strategy of word coinage. This may bring coincidental success in communication, but we feel that its contribution to the condition (a) is somehow doubtful.

5. The term ‘avoider’ is borrowed from Cohen & Olshtain (1993).

6. This has been partially confirmed in our ongoing empirical study mentioned in Note 1.

References


