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Communication Strategies: Are They Worth Teaching?

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This paper attempts to verify the significance of communication strategies in language classes, the most neglected component of communicative competence, and account for their teaching implications based on data collected at Stirling University. Tasks were assigned to learners of Japanese and native speakers of Japanese to see their strategy types. Based on the data obtained from the tasks, the following comparisons are made:

1. Communication strategies by the learners immediately after being taught through the audio-lingual approach and by the same learners six months later, after having been encouraged to use communication strategies in class.
2. Communication strategies by the L1 speakers and by the L2 learners.

And the following noteworthy points are drawn from the analysis of the data.

— The choice of the strategy types is as important as grammatical accuracy.
— What determines the learner's choice of strategies is not his preference, but is more likely to be his linguistic constraints.
— Variability between the learner's choice of strategy types and those of L1 speakers narrowed after conscious teaching of communication strategies in class.

In addition, conscious teaching of communication strategies changed the learners' attitudes toward their language learning. It suggests the necessity of further research focusing on the correlation between communication strategies and learning strategies.

Communicative Competence: Strategic Competence as One of Its Components

The teaching of a second language should be dealt with alongside a theory that

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provides a framework for the whole syllabus, the methodological implications, and the criteria for selecting pedagogic materials for evaluating learners' improvement or the effectiveness of the teaching. In the view of the communicative approach it is the learner's development of communicative competence that is aimed for. In other words, the teaching and learning of the target language, aiming at communicative competence as a final goal, should be designed, implemented, and evaluated on the basis of a theory which focuses on the nature of real communication.

Communicative competence, however, has been one of the main issues attracting the attention of linguists, language teachers, and researchers over its definition and its components. However, it seems that, even now, a consensus has not been reached on this matter. Therefore it is important that I state what model of communicative competence is assumed in the following discussion. Here, the model is based on Canale and Swain (1980): *grammatical/sociolinguistic/strategic competence* for its simplicity, and where *strategic competence* counts as much as the other two components.[1] On the basis of the model, I would like to focus on *strategic competence*, which is defined by Canale and Swain (1980: 30) as "verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence." These components, as Tarone and Yule (1989: 19) argue, "have not received as much attention as the other two, yet they are clearly crucial elements in the second language learner's repertoire." And Dornyei and Thurrell (1991: 17) describe it as the "most neglected component by language course books and teachers." If communicative competence is set as a final goal, then naturally the strategic aspect should not be overlooked, but should be incorporated into the language teaching objectives. That is significant for mastery of communicative competence in a second language.

Due to the fact that researchers started to pay more attention to the 'process' of language learning rather than merely looking at the 'product' alone, communication strategies as a compensatory backup system started to be the focus of a series of studies and research around the late 1970s and early 1980s (for example; Tarone, 1977; Varadi, 1980; Faerch and Kasper, 1980, 1983; Canale and Swain, 1980; Poulisse et al., 1984). As a result, different strategies have been identified and classified.[2]

The diagram below developed by Faerch and Kasper (1983) represents the status of communication strategy in speech production. And this is the status upon which the discussion in this paper is based.

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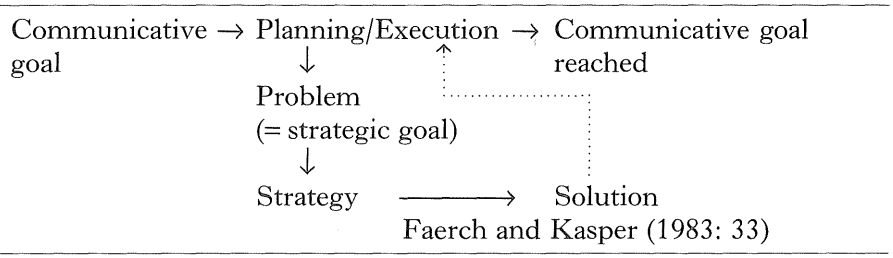
[1] Although Canale (1983) added *discourse competence* to these components, this new inventory does not affect my view of *strategic competence*.

[2] There is a criticism against classification of compensatory strategies and its taxonomy of being task specific, product oriented, ambiguous and lacking in generality. Poulisse (1987) proposes two basic strategy types only: 'conceptual' and 'linguistic,' arguing that this classification is very general and thus applicable to a wide range of compensatory strategy data.



Faerch and Kasper (1983: 33)

Communication strategy is what is referred to as 'compensatory strategy' by Faerch and Kasper (1980), who define it primarily by its nature of being problem-oriented. When learners experience problems in real communication, it is the strategy that the learner depends on as a solution. These problems can result from lack of knowledge of particular items or rules, insufficient automatization (concern with fluency or correctness; anticipation of difficulties), and difficulty in retrieving particular items/rules. In order to solve problems the learner tends to have two types of approach: avoidance behavior and achievement behavior. This study focuses on the latter, with which the learner tries to expand his communicative resources when he faces linguistic limitation, rather than avoiding or reducing his communicative goals. To be more specific, it attempts to pinpoint the plans, processes, and outcomes of strategies when L2 (Japanese) learners have linguistic constraints, especially in referring to a certain lexical item. This is what has been called the 'referential strategy' by Kellerman et al. (1990). They define this as "the process of the selection of the properties of the referent that the speaker then encodes in order to solve his lexical problem and maintain his communicative intent" (ibid. 164–65). In the following I will discuss what elements come into operation when the learner refers to an item of which he does not know the name in Japanese.

Method

Two tasks were assigned to subjects at an interval of 6 months. In each task three referents are listed for them to refer to in Japanese for a potential Japanese interlocutor. Although picture or story description tasks in the form of aural pair-work is a popular way to collect data, the samples in this research were taken in written form. (The writing system was not focused on here — some responded in hiragana, some in a mixture of hiragana and Chinese characters, and some in Romanized Japanese.) Since it is not obvious whether the learner's production in communication results from 'strategy' or from normal communication, tasks were given on the assumption that the learners had not learnt the items in L2 and therefore they had to be conscious of their using or not using communication strategy. They were given approximately ten minutes to do each task. The subjects were native speakers of English who had studied the Japanese language at the University of Stirling for a year. All of the students' L1 was English except for one Spanish student and one Chinese student from Singapore, but their command of English had reached proficiency level. When the first task was implemented, they had been taught four hours a week with

a native speaker of Japanese and two hours with a native speaker of English using JSL (Jorden, 1987) as a course textbook.

In Task 1, 17 samples were involved and the following referents were given with instructions.

Task 1 (implemented in October 1992)
If you do not know how to refer to the following things in Japanese, what would you do/say, or how would you refer to them, so that a hearer can correctly identify them. (in Japanese)
Kettle:
Calculator:
Telephone answering machine:

Three instruments that were familiar to the learners but that they did not know how to refer to by name were chosen. Instruments or devices have specific functions that are commonly recognized. So it is expected that one can refer to an instrument by its function if one has no linguistic constraints on one's ability to do so. Task 1 aims to judge in what way the learners get their meaning across with limited linguistic resources.

In task 2, the same subjects did the task, but four of the original group of students were studying abroad, so these four samples will be eliminated from comparative analysis.

Task 2 (implemented in February 1993)
The same instructions as above were given.
Haggis:
Microwave oven:
TV licence investigator:

This time referents were chosen from a different range: food, instruments, and people, items that may demand various approaches from the subjects in their description, and that also allow the subjects more freedom.

Data Analysis

The answers to each task were collected and analyzed into strategic patterns. As shown below, the taxonomy developed by Faerch and Kasper (1983) is mainly used for classification of strategies, i.e., generalization, paraphrase (description or circumlocution), word-coinage, and code-switching (see ibid.: 47–50). A unique strategy was found from some of the weak learners' answers, which is added to the classification under the term of training transfer. The learners' strategies are classified according to category, and also numbers are given to them for further reference in the following discussion.[3] The strategic patterns observed in tasks 1 and 2 are shown below.

[3] The strategy types listed in the following discussion are likely to be viewed as too detailed and specific to each task, therefore lacking in generality. This research, however, attempts to observe what the learners are doing; thus it is important that the classification of strategy types correspond to the processes of learner's language production.

Task 1

0 Making no effort (No risk-taking)

Paraphrase

1 Referring to the effect which is produced by the item being asked about.
(Corpus) —mizu ga sugu atsuku narimasu
—hayaku tabemono ga dekimasu

2 Referring to the function of the item being asked about.
—mizu o sugu atsuku shimasu
—den'wa no messeji o dekiru no kikai desu

3 Referring to the reason that the item should be used.
—12389+1416 muzukashīne soreni chīsai mashin o irimasu
—samuino (for tsumetai) tabemono ga arimasu atsui tsukuritain'desu (for atsuku shitain'desu)
—ocha tsukuritain'desu kedo
—messēji dekitain'desu kedo watashi wa rusu desu
—sūjini yowai kara kore o tsukaimasu

4 Referring to where the item being asked about can be found.
—tokidoki den'wa no soba ni kikai ga arimasu

5 Referring to a thing which is similar to the item being asked about.
—chīsai kon'pyūtā to onaji yōna

6 Referring to its brand name
—Casio

Generalization

7 Generalizing the item.
—chīsai mashin'desu
—chīsai kon'pyūtādesu

Word coinage

8 Naming the item being asked.
—den'wa no messēji mashin
—den'wa kasetto

Language switch

9 Referring to the item in English (katakana form)
—karikyurētā
—messēji o rekōdo

Training transfer

10 Reciting conversations from the coursebook involving the item being asked about.
—moshimoshi beep beep! donata desuka? den'wa bangōwa?
messēji onegai shimasu

Cooperative strategy

11 Signalling his/her problem and attempting to get the problem solved on a cooperative basis.

Task 2

Paraphrase

12 Explaining how to use the item.
—doa o akemasu poketto ni tabemono o iremasu
—tabemono o microwave ni irete sorekara botan o oshite

13 Creating a common ground
—terebi ga arimasu kara raisen'su ga irimasu
—terebi o mirutokini wa terebi no kaisha ni okane o agemasu (for haraimasu)

2 Referring to the function of the item.
—nijūbyō ni kōhī ga atatakaku dekimasu
—totemo hayaku ryōri shimasu

Generalization

7 Generalizing the item.
—sukottoran'do no tabemono desu
—daidokoro no dōgu desu

Word coinage

8 Naming the item.
—ryōriki

To evaluate to what extent the students achieve the purpose of each task, I asked the native speakers of Japanese to guess what was being explained by the students. Each native speaker of Japanese took one student's answers; therefore, I had 13 native speakers of Japanese each listening to one student's answers read aloud by me.[4] The following chart shows how the native speakers of Japanese interpreted the students' attempts. The numbers on the left 1–13 indicate the students involved, and below the list of items being asked about, what the native speakers of Japanese guessed is indicated. '—' indicates that no attempt was made by the student, and ' ? ' indicates that the native speaker of Japanese does not have any idea what is being referred to. ' ! ' means the meaning got across. On the right side of ' ! ', the kinds of strategies used by the students are indicated with numbers to see which strategies are successful. I do not include the unsuccessful strategies this time because these tend to be attributed to lack of linguistic accuracy. It is obvious that some minimal grammatical competence is necessary to transfer meaning, no matter what strategy type is chosen.

What is noticeable in task 1 in comparison to task 2 is that: 1) half the learners (6 out of 13) made no efforts to get meaning across; 2) the strategy types the learners

[4] This method of Japanese native speakers' reading aloud the student's answers, in a sense, might be questionable, since it is methodologically controlled and it does not count learners' potential errors in actual articulation of the use of strategies. However, as Bialystok (1990: 61) points out, "Research that is carried out in completely natural settings is difficult to conduct and the results are often problematic to interpret . . . . Controlled laboratory study assures the researcher that the phenomenon under investigation will be addressed and that superfluous variance owing to extraneous contextual factors will be minimized." I support that view as adequate for this preliminary research.

Table 1

	Task 1			Task 2		
	Calculator	Kettle	Telephone a.m.	Haggis	Microwave	TV l.i
1	post code	—	—	?	!8,2	!13,2
2	!7,5	—	—	!7	!7,2	station employee
3	!7,3	!3,2	!3,9,1	!7	!7,3,2,12	!13,2,9
4	!3,11	teapot	!8	!7	!1,12	!13,2
5	?	!2	!3,1,4	!7,9	!2	!2
6	!7	?	—	?	!2	!13,2
7	!9	—	—	!7	—	?
8	!1,7	coffee maker	fax machine	!7	!1,2,7	president
9	!6	—	—	rice ball	?	TV licence fee
10	abacus	teapot	—	black pudding	!1,3	TV licence fee
11	—	—	—	?	?	?
12	!3	hot water	!10	chips	chips	drama
13	!9,3	teapot	!3,2	!7	kettle	!2

tried out for each referent varied in task 1 but the types used in task 2 showed similarity; 3) the students tended to rely on chunks of expressions they had memorized (this is especially true among unsuccessful strategies); 4) the purpose of the task (getting meaning across) was poorly achieved.

It is interpreted that, first of all in 1), the students lacked confidence in putting potentially wrong propositions into words, because they are not used to taking risks nor had they been encouraged to do so previously. Even some good students, in terms of linguistic competence, were not be able to cope with task 1. In task 2 (after conscious teaching of communicative strategies however), all of the students made some efforts to get meaning across.

In 2), it was observed that the students intuitively used various strategies and tried to provide sufficient information about the referents to overcome limited linguistic resources in task 1. On the other hand in task 2 the strategies in referring to the item became more stable; take 'microwave oven' for instance: strategy type 2, referring to the function of the item, was used by 6 subjects. According to the results, communication strategies seem to play an important role even at the beginners' level, since these can compensate for the students' low level of linguistic competence. Savignon (1983) also suggests that a certain sociolinguistic and also strategic ability can allow the learner some amount of communicative ability.

In 3), the students' preference for using chunks of expressions from memory, regardless of their effectiveness and appropriateness to the task given, can be regarded as a training transfer (transfer that can be traced to teaching methods they had experienced and also consequently their learning style). Memorization is naturally an important learning strategy; however, too much reliance on this, disregarding context and meaning, may possibly result in discouraging any attempts at creative production and inviting panic if the learner forgets the expressions needed.

In 4), it can be hypothesised that the learners used more successful strategies in

task 2 than 1. Code-switching, L1-based strategies that tend to be used by weak learners (Bialystok, 1983), were less used and training transfer was not found in task 2.

However, code-switching can be successful if L1 and L2 lexical terms are similar, although this was not encouraged in the classroom.

In the following discussion, I will look more closely at the results to investigate which strategy types are successful or unsuccessful, and the implications for teaching Japanese as a foreign/second language. First, let us see how students deal with one item of the task and compare different approaches to it, in order to see what elements contribute to success or failure.

Case Study 1

Focusing on one item, 'calculator,' I chose three students from different groups in terms of linguistic competence and their learner types: student 1 (hereafter S1) good/analytical, (S4) fair/communicative/analytical, (S9) poor/communicative.[5] The aim of this case study is to see how students of different linguistic competence and learner types tackle the task given. Their L1 samples were also taken in December 1993 (fourteen months after the implementation of task 1, so they did not remember what they did with the task in L2) to compare the strategies used in L1 and L2. Below, the ways in which the learners refer to the calculator in L2 and L1 are given in order.

(S1) Calculator: unsuccessful
(L2) amari (for totemo) chīsai desu. bangō no shigoto wa muzukashiku nakunarimasu.
(strategy type) 7,1
(L1) A small battery operated appliance used to perform various mathematical functions.
7,2

(S4) Calculator: successful
(L2) 546/129 ikuradesuka? onamae wakarimasen kedo. (then I

[5] Based on a questionnaire designed to see the learner's learning type and also the day-to-day performance of the learners in class, I use the categorisation for English learners taken from Willing's model quoted by Nunan (1991: 170). My intention is to give additional information about learners involved; however, I used this framework for reference only. Thus, I do not argue the correlation between learner types and performance here.
concrete learners: These learners tend to like games, pictures, films, video, using cassettes, talking in pairs, and practising English outside class.
analytical learners: These learners like studying grammar, studying English books and reading newspapers, studying alone, finding their own mistakes, and working on problems set by the teacher.
communicative learners: These students like to learn by watching, listening to native speakers, talking to friends in English and watching television in English, using English out of class in shops, trains, etc., learning new words by hearing them, and learning by conversations.
authority-oriented learners: These learners preferred the teacher to explain everything, like to have their own textbook, to write everything in a notebook, to study grammar, learn by reading, and learn new words by seeing them.

would pretend I was using a calculator and say "arimasuka")
3,11
(L1) Small machine with lots of numbers used for mathematic calculations.
7,2

(S9) Calculator: successful
(L2) kon'pyūtā desu. nihon no kaisha tsukurimasu. Casio.
7,6
(L1) When you need to add big numbers, you use this.
3

In analyzing these samples, the following criteria will be looked at: firstly, how successful their strategies in L2 are (how the native speakers of Japanese perceive the learners' intention); and secondly, how strategy types differ in L1 and L2.

Each student used different strategy types for the item in L2: (S1) generalizing and giving an effect which is realized by the item, (S4) referring to the situation in which the item is likely to be used, and (S9) referring to a thing which is similar to the item and giving a popular brand name.

How the Japanese native speakers perceived what is being explained by the L2 learners may depend on various factors such as: 1) learners' linguistic accuracy, 2) Japanese native speakers' experience and knowledge of the world, and 3) the level of tolerance/willingness to pay attention to the learners' utterances. In this study, we use only the written code, and the subjects and native speakers of Japanese had never met each other. Thus we were unable to observe the dynamics between L2 learners and L1 speakers, namely, *negotiation of meaning;* the students might have got their meaning across successfully if they had met the native speakers of Japanese face to face. According to the results, (S4) and (S9) got their meaning across. (S1), despite his relatively higher linguistic competence than the other two students, misled the Japanese into answering 'post code.' *Bangō no shigoto*, which he made up for 'calculation,' did not work successfully for this Japanese person.

This result illustrates that choosing a way of achieving the goal is as important as trying to be linguistically accurate, and it conforms to the view of Yule and Tarone (1990: 181): "— individuals may be able to communicate their intended meanings very successfully without necessarily demonstrating a high degree of grammatical accuracy in linguistic form. Alternatively, individuals may be able to produce consistently accurate linguistic forms without necessarily achieving success in communicating their intended meanings."

Nevertheless, minimal grammatical competence is a prerequisite for success in the use of strategies. Thus, when and at what stage the communication strategies should be encouraged is another matter of concern.

Case Study 2

This time we look at the Table 1 (p. 67) horizontally in order to see if: 1) the learner has his own favorite strategies which he resorts to, 2) the learner changes his strategies according to the task given, 3) the learner uses different strategies in tasks 1 and

2.

It is assumed that instruments that are usually designed to perform a specific activity can be easily explained by referring to these functions. Among the list of vocabulary used in the two tasks, the instruments are 'calculator,' 'kettle,' 'telephone answering machine,' and 'microwave oven.' Let us look at, for instance, student 3 (hereafter S3). S3 tends to try out various strategies. In task 1, S3 used 2 (function of the item) with 'kettle,' saying *kore ga atsui H_2O tsukurimasu.* But S3 did not use 2 for 'calculator' and 'telephone answering machine.' This indicates that explaining 'calculator' and 'telephone answering machine' was linguistically too demanding for S3 at this stage. In this strategy type, S3 would be required to use *keisan suru* (to calculate) and *rokuon suru* (to record), expressions that had not been introduced in class. Apparently S3 avoided referring to the functions of these items, instead using strategy 3 (reason that the item should be used) for both 'calculator' and 'telephone answering machine'; 7 (generalizing the item) for 'calculator,' and 9 (Katakana form) and 1 (effect which is realized by the item) were used for 'telephone answering machine.' In task 2, S3 used 2 (function of the item) wherever possible; one cannot refer to the function of food unless it has a specific function, for instance, reducing cholesterol and so on. *Haggis*, one of the best known Scottish traditional dishes, cannot be usually referred by its function; most of the L2 learners (and also native speakers of Japanese) referred to it with 7, and especially the native speaker of Japanese used 15 (see the following section). S3 referred to functions of the items for 'microwave oven' and 'TV licence investigator.'

With regard to the objectives stated above, it is observed in relation to 1) and 2) that what determines the strategies chosen by students is not their preference, but is more likely to be their linguistic constraints. They choose properties of an item within their limited linguistic L2 resources, which is probably not the best way to phrase an explanation, but which is the best solution they can find under the circumstances.

Strategy Types of Native Speakers of Japanese

Do native speakers use communication strategies? If yes, then in what way is their use of the strategies similar to or different from that of L2 learners? Faerch and Kasper (1983: 33) point out two possible situational conditions where L1 users set out strategies: firstly, "(where) they lack . . . a specific vocabulary needed for talking about a given topic, or situationally relevant linguistic means are not readily accessible, due to psychological constraints like fatigue or anxiety," and secondly, "(where) interlocutors whose receptive competence does not match what would be a native speaker's normal language use, as happens in interaction with children, members of different social or geographical groups, or L2 learners."

I asked native speakers of Japanese to do the same task as described above in "Method" in Japanese to see what referential strategies L1 speakers tend to use. The instructions given this time had to be changed accordingly to "How would you refer to the following items if your non-Japanese interlocutor does not understand?" Since

the subjects know the names of the referents, it would not be realistic nor communicative if such instructions as "If you do not know how to refer to it in Japanese" were given, and the data obtained from it would not be relevant. In this way, although the method of elicitation is not the same, referential strategies in L1 and L2 can be compared within the same criteria. What L1 speakers do in referential strategies is to find properties of a referent in relation to the assumed L2 learners' level of linguistic competence. On the other hand, what non-native Japanese speakers do is to find properties of a referent in relation to their linguistic limitations. Although both types of strategies involve a kind of adjustment in the planning phase, the former involves the adjustment of the *form* of expressing whereas the latter involves the adjustment of the *goal*. In the following L1 speakers' samples, the subjects assumed L2 learners as their interlocutors. Eight samples of L1 speakers of Japanese were taken (4 of them are either experienced or current Japanese language teachers). The strategies below were used in L1 speakers' corpus only.

14 material of which referent is made
— tetsu de dekite imasu
— hitsuji no niku de dekite imasu

15 describing its physical characteristics
— marui niku desu

16 describe the sound it makes (onomatopoeia)

Table 2

L1 speakers

	Calculator	Kettle	Telephone a.m.	Haggis	Microwave	TV l.i.
1	2,5	2,14	3,2	7,5	2	13,2
2	2,	3,2	3,2	7,14	12,1	13,2
3	7,1	3,2	7,2	7,15	7,16,2	2
4	2	2	2	7,15	2	13,2
5	3,2	2	12,2	7	2	13,2
6	2,7	7,2	7,2	7	5,2	13,2
7	2,7,9	2	2,1	7,15	2	13,2
8	2	12,2	3,2	7,15	2,16	13,2

L2 learners

	Calculator	Kettle	Telephone a.m.	Haggis	Microwave	TV l.i.
1	post code	—	—	?	8,2	13,2
2	7,5	—	—	7	7,2	station employee
3	7,3	3,2	3,9,1	7	7,3,2,12	13,2,9
4	3,11	teapot	8	7	1,12	13,2
5	?	2	3,1,4	7,9	2	2
6	7	?	—	?	2	13,2
7	9	—	—	7	—	?
8	1,7	coffee maker	fax machine	7	1,2,7	president
9	6	—	—	rice ball	?	TV licence fee
10	abacus	teapot	—	black pudding	1,3	TV licence fee
11	—	—	—	?	?	?
12	3	hot water	10	chips	chips	drama
13	9,3	teapot	3,2	7	kettle	2

— chin to oto ga suru

A comparison of L1 and L2 strategies suggests the following:

1) L2 learners tried out various strategies, whereas L1 speakers' strategies were stable in terms of the strategy types used in each referent.
2) Variability between a learners' choice of strategy types and those of L1 speakers narrowed in task 2.

L1 speakers who have no linguistic constraints refer to criterial features of referents thus strategy types chosen were stable. In L1 speakers' strategies, instruments (tools) were invariably referred to by functions (strategy type 2), and it was also true in referring to TV licence investigator, whose job is to perform the role of investigator, just as a calculator performs an expected role — working out mathematical questions. In L2 learners' strategies, however, 2 was not necessarily used for these referents. Evidently, L2 learners do not have enough linguistic resources to go for this option. Key words such as *keisan suru, wakasu, rokuon suru* which should be used to refer to the functions of the referents, were not available in L2 learners' knowledge of the language. Therefore for 'calculator' for instance, seven subjects out of nine who succeeded in getting meaning across either generalized the item (7) or referred to the reason the item should be used (3), or both, instead of referring to its function. Interestingly, in 'telephone answering machine,' strategies only used by L2 learners were 4 (referring to where the item can be found), 8 (word coinage), 9 (language switch), 10 (training transfer, Table 2), which show that they were linguistically less demanding for the learners. It must be noted that there were a considerable number of samples that failed to get meaning across simply because of lack of accuracy, which resulted from learner's employing L1 strategies that demanded greater linguistic resources than they had at present in the IL (interlanguage). Just like the above mentioned examples (p. 68) *bangō no shigoto* (for calculation) was not understood as the learner hoped it would be.

As the learner increases his linguistic resources, it is hypothesized that the strategy types chosen will become stable, as with an L1 speaker, invariably referring to criterial features of the referents. Criterial features are something that the listener would also associate with a referent most, therefore they are the most effective aspects to refer to when the learner's linguistic competence allows him to do so. However, if this is not the case, the learner might invite confusion. So it is important that the learner should assess the best way to get meaning across, taking various elements into consideration, such as his L2 linguistic competence, L1 knowledge, the criterial features of a referent, how interlocutors might be associated or familiar with a referent, and so on.

Conclusion and Implications for Teaching Japanese

This study coincided with a change of teaching approach in the Japanese-language course at the University of Stirling as a result of curriculum and syllabus reform. Until this change, the learners had been expected to produce accurate and native-like Japanese-language materials in the class. With the introduction of the new teaching

approach, however, I and the other co-teacher decided to handle some of the responsibilities that the former teaching staff used to take to the learners. Instead of spending limited teaching hours in drilling of target expressions and explaining new grammatical rules and so on, we decided to spend more time on actual interaction with the learners. Most of the class hours were therefore used for the learners to try out their hypothesis of L2 language materials and to have meaningful and real communication opportunities through task-based and problem-solving activities, where language learning processes are highlighted. Communication strategies were consciously encouraged in this context.

It can be debated whether communication strategies can be taught or the learner can be encouraged by the teacher explicitly to use communication strategies. There is always the potential danger of the learner not learning a lot more than he has already acquired and developing fossilization at an earlier stage if he becomes too dependent on communication strategies and does not find much need to learn unacquired words, forms, or expressions. However, there are also advantages in introducing the notion of communication strategies. Instead of giving up communication goals or abandoning the desired message, as he tries to continue communication and avoid communication breakdown, this whole process can become fluency practice. When the learner happens to need to name an unacquired lexical item, for example, he could paraphrase the word with its superordinate, give a functional description, or state its physical characteristics, so as to try to keep communication going. This is the point where communication strategies and learning strategies are entangled.

The distinction between communication strategies and learning strategies is not always clear in the literature; as Corder (1983: 16) argues, "one of the principle confusions found is between what are called strategies of learning and strategies of communication." Tarone (1983: 67) suggests that "the motivation underlying the use of strategy" draws a line between the two. If so, the communication strategies used in the classroom situation are "learning strategies." And the teacher's role is to facilitate the learners' learning activities by eliciting L2 materials bearing each component of communicative competence, *grammatic, sociolinguistic* and *strategic competence,* in mind.

One of the main purposes of the study is to seek for ways of improving the learners' communicative competence through the processes of learning. The study presented above is one example of day-to-day teaching and learning activities. More importantly, after conscious teaching of strategies, firstly, the learners stopped being passive and afraid of making mistakes, and became more active and motivated in learning; secondly, the learners initiated conversations, and tried to use Japanese inside and outside the classroom in teacher-learner and even learner-learner situations, and the learners tried to learn the language by using L2 as a medium.

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