

Communication strategies in French as a foreign language

Anna Flyman

Introduction

This paper examines the role communication strategies play in the maintenance of communication in a classroom. The effect these strategies may have on the acquisition of a language is also discussed.

There is often a lack of communication in a Swedish foreign language classroom which leads to the inability to communicate in a native-like way even after several years of learning the language. This lack of communication training is partly due to the great number of students that a teacher is responsible for. It is not an easy task for a teacher to allow twenty students to communicate freely in a situation which is strictly limited in time. Even a classroom can give opportunities for communication though. One method is to be discussed in this paper and involves students working in pairs. Porter 1986:202 mentions earlier research which shows that learners do not necessarily copy the errors that are made by their conversational partner. Exercises carried out by two learners therefore constitute a method to increase communication and is worth a closer examination. This paper will also deal with the proposition that different kinds of classroom exercises can give rise to variation in the practicing of a language.

The pilot study that is the basis of this paper, was carried out in a Swedish classroom with learners of French as a foreign language. The subjects are in their fourth year of French studies and have no or little experience of French in 'natural' situations. The purpose of this study was to determine the role of communication strategies in communication between two learners in three different tasks. The tasks differed in that they involved varied degrees of control, i.e. the extent to which the subject was free to choose his own utterances. To create an authentic classroom setting, the tasks were designed in order to be able to be used as a means of communication training in a classroom.

Communication strategies

Definitions

Several definitions of communication strategies have been proposed since the concept was first introduced by Selinker 1972. One of the definitions most often referred to is the one provided by Tarone 1980, who considers communication strategies to be an interactional phenomenon: “a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures are not shared”. This definition has been criticised in that it does not account for situations where there is no or delayed feedback, as in lectures. Færch & Kasper 1983 have adopted a psycholinguistic approach and recognize communication strategies as being a part of the planning process. The strategies are used when the learner has problems with the original plan and cannot execute it: “potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal”. It has been argued that ‘problematicity’ shouldn’t be regarded as a defining criterion of communication strategies. According to Bialystok 1990, communication strategies may be used equally well in situations where no problems have arisen, as is the case when a native speaker gives a road description to a stranger using a long definition instead of the actual word. Bialystok has also questioned ‘consciousness’ as a criterion in defining communication strategies.

This pilot study is based on the definition given by Færch & Kasper 1983 on the grounds that the communication strategies in the data have been identified according to when problems have arisen in the communication.

Taxonomies

The early taxonomies are based on surface structural differences in the utterances and have proposed several linguistic possibilities to express a thought. Tarone has, from an interactional perspective, claimed that there are strategies intended to overcome the differences between the learner’s and the native speaker’s linguistic knowledge as well as strategies that are applied when there does not seem to be any solution to the problem. In Tarone’s taxonomy, five main categories are distinguished: *avoidance*, *paraphrase*, *conscious transfer*, *appeal for assistance* and *mime*. In avoidance strategies the learner decides not to say anything in order to avoid communication problems. There are two possibilities, *topic avoidance* where the problem is avoided and *message abandonment* where the learner starts to refer to an object but gives up because it is too difficult. With paraphrase Tarone means

“the rewording of the message in an alternate, acceptable target language construction, in situations where the appropriate form or construction is not known or not yet stable”. Paraphrase is divided into *approximation*, *word coinage* and *circumlocution*. Conscious transfer involves translating word for word from the native language, *literal translation*, or the use of a native language term, *language switch*. In *appeal for assistance* the learner asks for the correct term, whilst *mime* is the use of non-verbal strategies.

Færch & Kasper place communication strategies in a model of speech production. The model has two phases: a planning phase where the plan is developed, and an execution phase where the plan is executed. If there are problems with the plan so that it cannot be executed, the learner either avoids the problem which leads to a change of the communicative goal and *reduction strategies*, or faces the problem and develops an alternative plan which leads to *achievement strategies*. With *formal reduction* the learner communicates by means of a system that has been phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, or lexically reduced, whereas *functional reduction* involves a reduced communicative goal. Besides Tarone’s ‘topic avoidance’ and ‘message abandonment’, Færch & Kasper also include *meaning replacement* as a functional reduction. The use of a ‘meaning replacement’ strategy implies a more general reference to the subject. Achievement strategies can either be to solve problems in the planning phase, *compensatory strategies*, or to somehow get hold of the missing term, *retrieval strategies*. The subtypes of ‘compensatory strategies’ are based on a different code (‘code switching’ and ‘interlingual transfer’), a different code and the IL code (‘inter-/intralingual transfer’), only the IL code (‘generalization’, ‘paraphrase’, ‘word coinage’ and ‘restructuring’), discourse phenomena (‘cooperative strategies’) or non-linguistic communication (‘mime’, ‘gestures’, etc.). ‘Generalization’, ‘paraphrase’ and ‘word coinage’ correspond approximately to Tarone’s ‘approximation’, ‘circumlocution’ and ‘word coinage’ respectively.

The most severe criticism of the traditional taxonomies has been directed towards their psychological credibility. Kellerman 1991 claims that some of the strategies demonstrate the same underlying cognitive processes and should therefore not be classified as different strategies even if they have different linguistic realisations. It has also been argued that the strategies are not generalised over task, language, and learner. The more practical problems concern the definitions of the strategies, that are sometimes too vague, and the choice of some criteria, e.g. ‘the construction of a new word’ as a definition

for ‘word coinage’ excludes all the words created by the learner but that already exist in the language.

More recent taxonomies are based on underlying processes involved in the production of communication strategies, which makes them psychologically plausible. Bialystok 1990 has expressed the importance of strategies differing in a psychologically correct way. Her theory is therefore based on the distinction between ‘analysis’ (or ‘knowledge’) and ‘control’ which is firmly grounded in cognitive psychology. Bialystok’s *analysis-based strategy* is “an attempt to convey the structure of the intended concept by making explicit the relational defining features”. The speaker modifies the content of the message by using his knowledge about the concept, e.g. to give information about it. A *control-based strategy* is “the manipulation of form of expression through attention to different sources of information”. Contrary to ‘analysis-based strategies’ the speaker here keeps the original intention with the utterance and turns to different means of reference outside the L2.

Another taxonomy based on underlying processes is used in an extensive project involving the investigation of compensatory strategies, called the Nijmegen project (see Poullisse et al. 1990). The Nijmegen group uses a binary system based on *conceptual* and *linguistic strategies*. Conceptual strategies are either *analytic* – the speaker refers “to the intended concept by listing (some of) its properties” – or *holistic*, the speaker “refers to a concept by using the word for a related concept”. There are also cases where analytic and holistic strategies are combined, e.g. *large shoes* for ‘boots’. Linguistic strategies involve the manipulation of the speaker’s linguistic knowledge. The subtypes are *morphological creativity* which is “the use of L2 rules of morphological derivation to create (what the subject assumes to be) comprehensible L2 lexis” and *strategy of transfer* which is when the speaker “exploits the similarities between languages”. The words or phrases that are transferred can sometimes be adjusted to the L2 and the use of a transfer strategy can also result in words that already exist in the language. The Nijmegen group does not claim that all utterances need to be purely conceptual or linguistic, as they may also be a combination of the two. Kellerman has proposed the use of ‘code strategy’ instead of ‘linguistic strategy’ partly on the grounds of the distinction that is made by the Nijmegen group between *ostensive definition* (pointing at something) and *mime*. Since ostensive definition is reminiscent of language switch it is assumed to be a code strategy, whereas mime is conceptual, in that it describes the properties of the concept.

Table 1. Surface structures of two binary systems.

	<i>Bialystok</i>	<i>Nijmegen</i>
<i>Analysis/Conceptual</i>	Paraphrase Word coinage Mime	Paraphrase Semantic word coinage Mime
<i>Control/Code</i>	Language switch Appeal for assistance	Linguistic word coinage Ostensive definition Transfer

Bialystok's distinction between 'analysis' and 'control' and the taxonomy used in the Nijmegen project are both binary systems based on underlying cognitive processes. Basically they have the same surface structures with the exception that the Nijmegen group makes a distinction between mime and ostensive definition and between semantic and linguistic word coinage. Bialystok has also included appeal for assistance in her 'control-based strategies' (see table 1).

A taxonomy used in the pilot study

In this study the taxonomy of the Nijmegen project has been adopted with some revision. Two factors motivated this choice of taxonomy: the psychological plausibility, and the differentiation between holistic and analytic strategies. The Nijmegen group do not, however, count 'appeal for assistance' as a compensatory strategy, but as an alternative (in addition to reduction strategies and compensatory strategies) for the learner to avoid communication break-down. This is a redundant division since the definition of compensatory strategies does not exclude 'appeal for assistance': "compensatory strategies are strategies which a language user employs in order to achieve his intended meaning on becoming aware of problems arising during the planning phase of an utterance due to his own linguistic shortcomings" (Poulisse et al. 1990). Since a learner using 'appeal for assistance' tries to "...achieve his intended meaning", this strategy should be listed among compensatory strategies. Bialystok includes 'appeal for assistance' in her 'control-based' strategies (equivalent to Nijmegen's 'linguistic' strategies) on the grounds that it directs the attention away from the linguistic system in use.

A definition of 'linguistic strategies' accordingly has to cover 'transfer' and 'morphological creativity' as well as 'appeal for assistance'. Adopting Kellerman's 'code strategies', we get the following definition: The speaker uses his knowledge about different codes to keep the original intention with

the utterance. This definition differs from Bialystok's 'control-based' strategies in that it is not dependent of means of reference outside the L2, but can also contain knowledge of L2-rules.

This study is not restricted to compensatory strategies, but has also focused on reduction strategies. Two major types of strategies have been recognized in the present data, 'avoidance' and 'abandonment'. An 'avoidance' strategy can be lexical, morphological or syntactic. Phonological avoidance is not considered in this study. 'abandonment' corresponds to Færch & Kasper's 'message abandonment'.

The pilot study

The purpose of this study was to compare three potential exercises in a classroom, each with a varied degree of controlled communication. The type of strategy used in each situation should give an idea of the value of these exercises in a classroom. The aim was to discuss the relationship between strategy-use and language acquisition and also to examine the role communication strategies play in the maintenance of communication in a classroom.

Subjects

The data were collected in a class with approximately four years of study of French as a foreign language. The students were in their first year of a Swedish 'gymnasium', which means that they were about 16 years old. According to the teacher, the class was above average and no single student stood out from the others. The study was aimed at tasks performed in pairs, so the subjects were asked to choose a partner. All participation was voluntary. The subjects did not receive any introduction of communication strategies before the study since this could have affected their choice of strategies. The only information given at this stage was that the results would not affect their grades and that their speech would be recorded. Ten subjects (five pairs) volunteered to perform the tasks. Every recording session lasted approximately one hour.

Tasks used in the study

In the translation task the subjects were each given five Swedish sentences to translate. The sentences were of average difficulty and contained some words and structures that were likely to cause problems to students at this level of study. The instructions were that the sentences should be translated into French by one of the subjects and then translated back into Swedish by the other subject.

The second task was to tell a story that was presented in a series of pictures. Each series constitutes a simple story with no speech involved. The series were chosen so that in retelling the story, words a bit above the subject's proficiency level were unavoidable. There is also a 'point', i.e. a funny ending, in each story. The instruction was for the speaker to retell the story in French in such a way that the point became clear to the listener. Each subject was given two series of pictures.

In the last task, the subjects were to discuss a topic with each other. Five topics of discussion were introduced to the subjects, who were to choose two of these. The topics were current in the news at the time and had been discussed enough in the media for the students to be acquainted with the most common arguments. The subjects decided who was going to be for or against the matter of discussion. Their instructions were that they should try to put forward their arguments, but that the arguments themselves did not have any significance for the task. The subjects decided when to end the discussion. After the discussion, the subjects were asked in Swedish if they had had any difficulties expressing themselves in French. These were the retrospective comments that were used in the identification of avoidance strategies in the discussion task.

Processing of the data

All data were transcribed using a slightly modified standard orthography. Pauses, repetitions, laughs, etc., were marked since they could have significance in the identification of communication strategies. Criteria for identifying strategies were also facial expressions and intonation which often signalled 'appeal for assistance'. In the discussion task, retrospective comments were used to identify avoidance strategies. A part of the identification had to be based on the researcher's intuition since it is hard to find a reliable method for identifying communication strategies. Sometimes a correct utterance can be a strategy, making it hard to recognize.

Table 2. Compensatory strategies.

	Translation	Series of pictures	Discussion
<i>Conceptual</i>	44 (56%)	33 (46%)	6 (15%)
Analytic	24 (31%)	22 (31%)	2 (5%)
Holistic	20 (25%)	11 (15%)	4 (10%)
<i>Code strategies</i>	34 (44%)	39 (54%)	33 (85%)
Transfer	17 (22%)	13 (18%)	20 (51%)
Appeal for assistance	17 (22%)	26 (36%)	13 (34%)

Results

Compensatory strategies

Analytic strategies are those that describe the features of the concept. They particularly consist of paraphrases and descriptions, but also of semantic word coinage, i.e. words that are created by the features of the concept, and some gestures. The translation task and the picture task have given rise to a large number of analytic strategies (see table 2), especially in form of paraphrase as in (1-3) but also as semantic word coinage (4) or description (5):

- (1) er une cho chose pour la tête (un chapeau)
- (2) il voudrait dormir er ##¹ et er il est mort (fondre)
- (3) er il il ne couche pas et il est alerte (se réveiller)
- (4) la maîtresse d'aéro (l'hôtesse de l'air)
- (5) le petit homme er qui n'ont pas chevaux (le naziste)

In the series of pictures, the subjects used many gestures to express a concept to which they lacked the French equivalent. Showing how to use a pair of scissors for 'cut' (*couper*), pointing backwards for 'return' (*retourner*) and making the sound of an explosion meaning that someone opened a bottle of champagne are examples of Analytic gestures. In the translation task gestures are only found accompanied by an oral explanation:

- (6) the subject puts her hand on the head 'un pour la tête' (un chapeau)
- (7) the subject moves her fingers on the table 'er il est là et er er après il est là' (transporter)

A holistic strategy is when the concept is replaced by a word that shares several features with the intended concept. These are what Tarone called

¹The following symbols are used: # = short pause, ## = longer pause, & = only one sound.

'approximation', i.e. the strategy of saying almost what you want to say. Most of the holistic strategies were found in the translation task:

- (8) j'ai *beaucoup* er disques er &k que # lui (plus)
- (9) le table er # pour écrire ## *avait mis* ## er ## à une autre chambre (transporter)
- (10) le climat de la France # n'est pas er # n'est pas aussi # *bien* que le temps d'italien (doux)
- (11) pendant le train arrive je dois acheter *une* # *paquet* cigarettes (une cartouche)
- (12) il achète er ## *des vêtements* (un costume)

A strategy of transfer is the use of another code to bring out the intended message. It is important to emphasize the fact that not all cases of transfer can be classified as strategy use. Sometimes words and structures influenced by another language are integrated in the learner's interlanguage. The strategies in this study are recognized by the learners' use of pauses, hesitations, laughs, etc. The transfer strategy was especially frequent in the discussion task. The kinds of transfer used were 'language switch', i.e. a word or an utterance borrowed from another language as in (13-15) or words borrowed from another language, preferably English, and made French (16-17):

- (13) l'homme a acheté er # er des des *gloves* [laughs] (des gants)
- (14) mettre la Suède dans er dans une er # dans une er pl *på en plats* # *i Europa*
- (15) on peut er on peut travaille en # ja *Köpenhamn* (Copenhague)
- (16) c'est très cher pour er er nous er régulaires # nous *régulaires* Suédoises (ordinaires)
- (17) mais moi j'a ## plein de *records* qui lui (des disques)

The most frequent transfer strategy was the direct translation of Swedish words and structures into French. The data showed examples of Swedish word orders (18-20), compounds (21), Swedish synonyms (22), and translations word for word (23):

- (18) une personne qui travailler dans une aéroplain er *attendre er pour vous* (vous attendre)
- (19) leur *économique* ## *calculation* [laughs] c'était mauvais (calcul économique)
- (20) er heurter avec avec er *le homme nez* (le nez de l'homme)
- (21) attendre er pour vous dans le # arrivier *arrivait* # *chambre* (le hall d'arrivée)
- (22) je dois acheter un baguet *une baguette* de cigarettes (une cartouche)
- (23) *comment haute* est le tour Eiffel? (la hauteur)

Table 3. Reduction strategies.

	Translation	Series of pictures	Discussion
<i>Abandonment</i>	3	7	3
<i>Avoidance</i>	20	33	7 ²
Lexical ³	5	6	4
Morphological	7	27	3
Syntactical	8	–	–

Appeal for assistance can either be to ask for help or to use a lexicon. This type of strategy was most frequently used in the picture task and in the discussion task. Often the subject proposes a word along with the appeal:

- (24) apprendre heter de så? (appartenir)
 (25) l'homme fait de la neige eller va heter snögubbe? ['or what is *snögubbe*?'] (un bonhomme de neige)

As is mentioned above, facial expressions and intonation are used as identification criteria if there is no direct question:

- (26) er lu le bureau avait ## flyttats? ['moved?'] (transporter)
 (27) ils sont dans la # neige?
 (28) jag har faktiskt ingen aning om hur ja ska översätta milt ['I really don't have a clue how to translate *milt*'] (doux)

Reduction strategies

For the frequency of reduction strategies, see table 3. A strategy of abandonment can be followed by a restructuring, i.e. the subject abandons the utterance and starts with a new utterance to convey the intended message, as in (29) and (30). Another alternative is to give up the utterance altogether as in (31) and (32):

- (29) une homme er est à le ## er il achète des vêtements
 (30) mais le prix de nej ## mais on ## gagner de l'argent
 (31) c'est le fille ## er ## ah skit samma ['never mind']
 (32) et avec le le le ## nä ## nä ['no no']

²To find avoidance strategies in a free discussion is not an easy task since it is hard to know what the subject's intention was with the utterance. This number is based on the information given by the retrospective comments. But even to the subject it is difficult to know what he could have said with a higher proficiency.

³Lexical avoidances differ in the three tasks in that it is possible in the translation task to mark the exact words that are avoided while this is more difficult in the picture task and nearly impossible in the discussion task.

Lexical avoidance involves the avoidance of a difficult word or whole utterances. In the translation task, lexical avoidance most frequently involves a single word:

- (33) le homme er eller l'homme er ## (vient de) a acheté er ## les gants
 (34) je fais acheter er (une cartouche) les cigarettes

In the picture task it can be difficult to know if one word is avoided. Those avoidance strategies that are counted are therefore those utterances that are essential for the 'point' to be understood. In the following story the key incident is the melting of the snowman, which is not mentioned. The story ends with the mother finding the snowman in the fridge, this is also the 'point' of the story. The retold story therefore contains two lexical avoidance strategies:

- (35) c'est deux personnes er une ho un homme et une petit fille #### ils sont dans la # neige er #### er ils er ils ## ja construit une er ## une er homme de neige er ## ils er er ## va heter de # prennent le homme de neige et ## mette mettons l'homme de neige er # dans le frigo

In the discussion task not much had been omitted according to the subjects. They often found it difficult, however, to find the right words and to use them in the right contexts. It is important, though, to emphasize the difficulties in estimating what would have been said with a greater vocabulary.

Most avoidance of morphological character invoked a non-inflection of the verbs. Several verbs were rendered in the infinitive rather than (in the majority of the cases) in the present tense. There were also examples of avoiding the plural (36) and of using the present tense instead of imperfect (37).

- (36) je pense que er er nous &n er on ne doit utiliser le er er
 (37) il n'est (n'était) pas satisfait er à quelque # chose

Syntactic avoidance was not very common and was only used in the translation task. The strategy involved a change of word order where the known part of the utterance was placed first. In (38) the Eiffel Tower constitutes the 'easy' part and is therefore used to introduce the sentence. Also, in (39) the problematic segment is situated at the end to be supported by the part of the utterance that is (assumed to be) correct:

- (38) er #### le tour Eiffel ## quelle haute elle a? (quelle est la hauteur de la tour Eiffel?)
 (39) il n'est pas satisfait er à quelque # chose (pour quelque raison il n'était pas satisfait)

Discussion

Compensatory strategies

It appears that the translation task gave rise to the highest number of compensatory strategies. This was to be expected since it is important to find the exact words in this kind of task, while in the other two situations greater flexibility in word choices is possible. The majority of the strategies in the translation task are conceptual. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is related to the number of processing demands in the task. According to Bialystok 1990, “control strategies tend to reduce processing demands by turning attention away from a difficult problem and finding some other means of solution”. As processing demands are relatively infrequent in the translation task and because there is no time pressure on the speaker conceptual strategies, which are somewhat demanding, are repeatedly used. Analytic strategies are the most time-consuming strategies and are therefore most frequently utilized when the speaker has enough time to plan his speech, as in the translation task.

The story-telling of the pictures also evoked a large number of compensatory strategies. It is important, however, to bear in mind that two series of pictures require a lot more speech than do five sentences for translation. In the picture task, the processing demands have increased – the speaker has to understand the pictures and their relationship to each other, as well as be able to select what is relevant for the comprehension of the story, and convey the entirety to the listener. As a result, the number of code strategies exceeded that of conceptual strategies.

In contrast to the two previous tasks, the subjects made use of relatively few compensatory strategies in the discussion task, which is a consequence of the possibilities available to the subjects to lead the discussion in a direction where the complex elements of the language could be avoided. Code strategies are clearly in the majority, which follows from the many processing demands that are involved in this task. Creativity is necessary to prevent communication from breaking down, memory is essential to prior arguments, and comprehension of the interlocutor’s utterances is relevant for the coherence of the discussion. There is also a time constraint, e.g. the interlocutor can take his turn in the middle of an utterance, which makes code strategies an efficient solution since they are the least time-consuming strategies.

Reduction strategies

The major difference in reduction strategies between the three tasks is to be found on the morphological level. 73% of the morphological avoidance

Table 4. Efficiency and practice of IL.

	Analytic	Holistic	Transfer	Appeal	Abandon.	Lex. avoid	Morf avoid	Syn. avoid
Efficiency	+/-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+
Practice IL	+/-	+	-	-	-	-	+	+

strategies were applied in the picture task, but only 8% in the discussion task. The avoidances concern, with few exceptions, the non-inflection of verbs for the present tense, i.e. the verbs are rendered in the infinitive. Since the avoided form is that of the present tense, the fact that it might be a question of ignorance of the form is excluded on the basis that this is one of the first forms taught in French as a foreign language and also because some verbs were inflected in present tense in some situations. What is surprising is the fact that those verbs that are erroneously given in the infinitive are usually common verbs, and that they present no pattern for when the infinitive form is used. Nor is it an individual related phenomenon. It is noteworthy that the subjects were stricter with the inflection of verbs in the present tense in free discussion than they were in more controlled situations. These results have not been examined further in this pilot study but are certainly worth examining in a future study.

Evaluation of the strategies

To get an idea of how communication strategies affect communication it is necessary to evaluate their function in a communicative situation. This has been done by the application of two criteria essential to communication, [+/-efficiency] and [+/-practice of interlanguage (IL)] (see table 4). Efficiency is determined in view of the success of the strategy. If the listener has appeared to understand the intentional message of the utterance, the strategy employed by the speaker is thus an efficient strategy whereas a non-comprehension which leads to a clarification or to the application of a new strategy is the indication of an inefficient strategy use. The estimation of efficiency in communication strategies has only addressed the grouped data and may consequently vary with the use of other experimentation tasks. A strategy that gives practice of the interlanguage is a strategy that requires rules and vocabulary in the L2.

The majority of the efficient analytic strategies are gestures or speech supported by gestures, which implies that verbal analytic strategies are to be classified as inefficient strategies. The practice of interlanguage also divides

analytic strategies into two groups, as the verbal strategies give greater opportunities for the application of IL rules while gestures cause no language use at all. Holistic strategies proved to be rather inefficient, especially in the translation task. They were, however, more successful in the discussion task and to some extent in the picture task, which implies that holistic strategies are dependent on the context to be correctly understood. However, considering the infrequency of holistic strategies in these tasks, they have been classified as inefficient strategies. The search for an equivalent in the subject's French vocabulary makes this a strategy of IL practice. Transfer strategies are efficient in this experimentation since the two interlocutors share the same L1. If, however, they were to have had different first languages, the efficiency rate would most likely have been different. A language switch does not generate any practice of IL rules. Certain transfer strategies may have that effect, though, if they involve the application of French rules. Appeal for assistance is certainly the most efficient strategy due to the fact that both interlocutors and the researcher were present at the recording session. Abandonment and lexical avoidance are strategies that neither contribute to efficiency nor to IL practice. The restructuring of an utterance following an abandonment is of course another matter and counts as a new strategy (as opposed to being a part of the abandonment strategy). Finally, morphological and syntactic strategies are efficient, as both meaning and the correct form were understood by the listener, and give opportunity for IL practice in that the vocabulary is made use of.

The translation task resulted in a large number of conceptual strategies and consequently a majority of inefficient strategies, whereas the picture task and the discussion task involved a higher number of efficient strategies, mainly due to the frequent use of transfer strategies and appeal for assistance. Efficient strategies keep communication going, with only minor interruptions when appealing for assistance. This is an important ingredient in the acquisition of a new language, in that it makes the learner feel that he can convey his messages and communicate thoughts and ideas in a natural way. Communication shows the learner that a language is more than just enumerating verbs and grammatical functions. This should lead to a greater interest in the language and a motivation to learn more. Code strategies must therefore be regarded as a means to reach a greater commitment to the language and to its acquisition.

The best strategies for practising IL rules are the conceptual strategies which are generally found in the translation task and (a bit less) in the picture

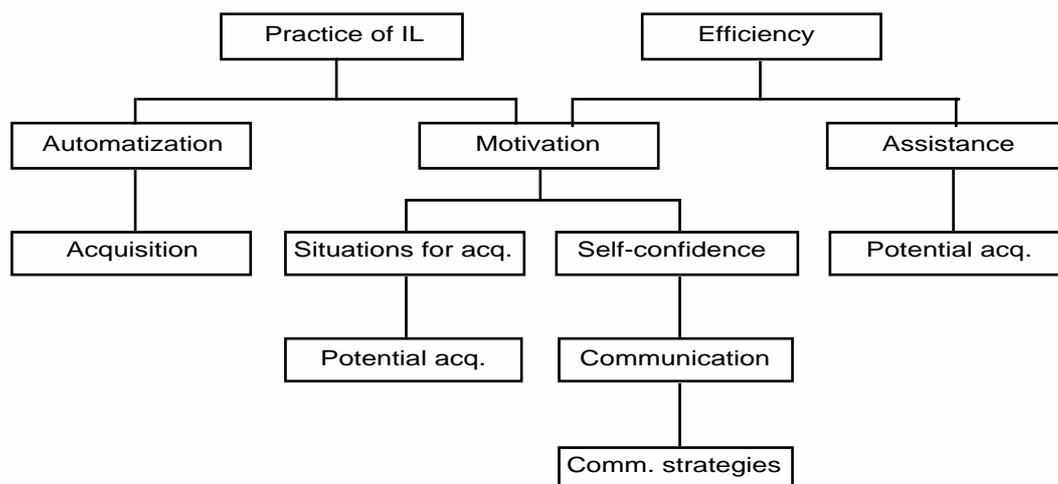


Figure 1. A model of the effects of communication strategies on acquisition.

task. Færch & Kasper 1983 mention an automatization process in their discussion of communication strategies and language acquisition. This process takes place when the learner increases the access to IL rules by using them in communication. After some time the rules are sufficiently accessible to become automatized. Verbal conceptual strategies, then, are influential in the learner's development of a foreign language.

Figure 1 presents a general view of the effects communication strategies have on acquisition. This model proposes two possibilities (the one not excluding the other) for strategies that give IL practice, i.e. strategies that are used in the translation task and in the picture task. The strategies can lead to automatization of the IL rules which result in acquisition since an automatized rule can be considered acquired. Another possibility is that the learner, by using conceptual strategies, discovers that he can communicate despite limited knowledge in the L2, which should give motivation to continued language training. A motivated learner creates situations where acquisition can take place by talking to native speakers of the L2, watching television, reading, etc., which leads to potential acquisition. Motivation is also closely related to self-confidence which in turn leads to more communication as the learner dares to talk in situations that used to be difficult for them. The use of code strategies and other strategies that give rise to efficient communication can also result in motivation, in that the learner, by keeping the communication going, uses the language in a way that is both more worthwhile and more fun. Another effect when using appeal for assistance is that the learner is likely to integrate the assisted word or structure into his linguistic system.

It has been indicated in this study that different experimental tasks give varied strategy use which then leads to acquisition in various ways. Strategies that give IL practice are especially applied in tasks with some degree of control whereas efficient strategies are more frequent where there is less control. The model in figure 1, however, shows that both types of strategy use result in potential acquisition. A variation of this kind of task in a classroom is therefore desirable. Translation tasks involve practice of IL rules while free discussions generate self-confidence and a desire to learn.

This study has shown that a lot is to be gained, in communication as well as in acquisition, by making learners work together in pairs. Looking into the more direct relationship between strategy use and acquisition would further state the import of exercises in pairs in a classroom. It is also necessary to make a comparison between learners with traditional instruction and those that come from a more communicative environment in order to be able to determine the role of the different tasks.

References

- Bialystok, Ellen. 1990. *Communication strategies*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Færch, Claus & Gabriele Kasper. 1983. 'Plans and strategies in foreign language communication'. In C. Færch & G. Kasper (eds.), *Strategies in interlanguage communication*, 20-44. London: Longman.
- Kellerman, Eric. 1991. 'Compensatory strategies in second language research: A critique, a revision, and some (non-) implications for the classroom'. In R. Phillipson et al. (eds.), *Foreign/second language pedagogy research*. Clevedon: Multilingual matters.
- Porter, P. 1986. 'How learners talk to each other: Input and interaction in task-centered discussions'. In R. Day (ed.), *Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition*, 200-23. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
- Poullisse, Nanda, Theo Bongaerts & Eric Kellerman. 1990. *The use of compensatory strategies by Dutch learners of English*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.
- Selinker, Larry. 1972. 'Interlanguage'. *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 10, 209-31.
- Tarone, Elaine. 1980. 'Communication strategies, foreigner talk, and repair in interlanguage'. *Language Learning* 30, 417-31.