Communication Strategies

Psycholinguistic and Sociolinguistic Perspectives

Gabriele Kasper and
Eric Kellerman

Applied Linguistics and Language Study

Communication Strategies

APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE STUDY

General Editor
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Communication Strategies: Psycholinguistic and Sociolinguistic Perspectives

Edited by

Gabriele Kasper
and
Eric Kellerman

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Introduction: approaches to communication strategies

GABRIELE KASPER and ERIC KELLERMAN

In 1983, the predecessor of this present volume was published. Called *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication*, it was a collection of 12 papers on the subject of how what have traditionally been called *communication strategies* (CS) are used to tackle and overcome linguistic problems encountered during interaction involving non-native speakers. Some of the papers in that book are classics of their kind, yet when the idea for a second edition of the book was first proposed some ten years later, we both felt that so much new research had taken place in the intervening years, not to mention work in neighbouring fields which was both interesting and relevant that an entirely new book was required. However, continuity between the previous and the present volumes is maintained not only in the general subject matter, but also in the fact that four of the contributors to the earlier work, Ellen Bialystok, Gabriele Kasper, Elaine Tarone, and Johannes Wagner, appear here once again.

Early studies of communication strategies concerned themselves mostly with questions of definition, identification and classification. Of these, definition is obviously primary – it is closely tied to the adopted theoretical perspective, and identification and classification crucially depend upon it. We will therefore begin by discussing different perspectives on the construct and its disciplinary context.

Definition

In early work, most notions of CS restricted the concept to problem-solving activity. Compare:

> ... used by an individual to overcome the crisis which occurs when language structures are inadequate to convey the individual's thought. (Tarone, 1977, p. 195)

> ... potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal. (Færch & Kasper, 1983d, p. 36)

> ... 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., 1984, p. 72)

These definitions have more in common, however, than their insistence on *problematicity* as definitional to CS. They all conceive of CS as mental plans implemented by the second language learner in response to an internal signal of an imminent problem, a form of self-help that did not have to engage the interlocutor's support for resolution (e.g., Færch & Kasper, 1983c, p. 36). The intraindividual, psycholinguistic view locates CS in models of speech production (e.g., Dechert, 1983; Færch & Kasper, 1983c) or cognitive organization and processing (Bialystok, 1990; Kellerman & Bialystok, this volume).

In contrast, Tarone saw CS as

> ... a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared. ... attempts to bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the second-language learner, and the linguistic knowledge of the target language interlocutor in real communication situations. (1983, p. 65)

The inter-individual, interactional view of CS has been adopted from the vantage point of different theoretical orientations – for instance, pattern theory (Wagner, 1983), collaborative theory (Wilkes-Gibbs, this volume), conversation analysis (Wagner & Firth, this volume), and critical sociolinguistics (Rampton, this volume). For comparative discussion of the 'psycholinguistic' and 'interactional' approach, see Færch and Kasper (1984), Yule and

Tarone (this volume), and Aston (1993) for 'intraorganism' vs 'interorganism' perspectives on communication.

It is true that even in the early days of CS research, some opposition was voiced against problematicity as definitional to CS (Bialystok, 1984; Dechert, 1983; Wagner, 1983). These scholars argued that language use is always strategic, in the sense that actors purposefully select from a wide array of resources those which optimally and cost-efficiently achieve the purpose at hand – a position taken from different information-processing perspectives, speech-act theory and other theories of pragmatics (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983) and widely shared in the field of communication (e.g., Kellermann, 1991; Wiemann & Daly, 1994). During the early days of CS research, however, the majority opinion converged on regarding CS as a specialized problem-solving activity.

Identification

Identification of CS depends to a great extent on what one considers a CS to be, and in this respect, it matters very much whether one conceives of CS as intraindividual or interindividual events. In their chapter in this book, Wagner and Firth take the view that the only data that constitute evidence of strategic activity are those stretches of speech marked by a speaker in some way ('flagged') as requiring specific attention on the part of the listener. For those interested in strategies as underlying processes in the individual mind, observable evidence for strategic activity may be harder to come by. Its existence may be a matter of inference rather than direct observation. In fact, highly proficient non-native speakers have been shown to be very good at anticipating and circumnavigating bottlenecks such that there is no obvious trace of difficulty in their speech protocols (Færch & Kasper, 1983c), and it is only through the learners' retrospective commentary that the researcher is made aware of the existence of such difficulties (Poulisse, 1990).

Unless the task is such that it unambiguously elicits (usually referential) problems and their solution, researchers thus have to rely on two sources of evidence to identify CS: markers in the discourse and retrospective protocols. The first comprise explicit strategy markers – metalinguistic comments of the 'I don't know

how to say this' sort – and implicit indicators such as an increase in hesitation phenomena (Dechert, 1983; Færch & Kasper, 1983b; Raupach, 1983). The second method involves play-back of the original discourse and self-identification of strategic activity by the informant. This form of self-report is, of course, subject to all the reservations that have been made about this data type in the literature (cf. Ericsson & Simon, 1980, 1984, for review). CS researchers who rely on self-report for strategy identification have referred to Ericsson and Simon's (1980, 1984) model of cognitive processing, pointing out that the 'problematic' information is under attention during task completion and hence reportable (Færch & Kasper, 1987b; Poulisse et al., 1987). Nevertheless, relying on one method of strategy identification seems risky; triangulation of different data types is advisable and has been employed successfully in research on CS in oral production (Poulisse, 1990; Poulisse et al., 1987) as well as in studies on lexical inferencing (Haastrup, 1987, 1991; Ross, this volume) and other modalities of language use and tasks (cf. studies in Færch & Kasper, 1987a).

Classification

Among second language acquisition (SLA) researchers, there has always been broad agreement as to what the various kinds of CS observable in non-native performance are. Most researchers will acknowledge that learners use their knowledge of other languages as well as various sorts of paraphrase, lexical substitution and gestures; they may also ask others for assistance, or surrender their immediate communicative goals. However, researchers differ in the way they treat observable strategic behaviours. The earliest, taxonomic, approach catalogued output differences (e.g., Tarone, 1977); a subsequent proposal related such output differences to a model of speech production (Færch & Kasper, 1983d), and the most recent scheme insists that categories for strategy classification should reflect distinct differences in processing rather than diverse types of linguistic form (e.g., Bialystok & Kellerman, 1987). For a detailed discussion of product- and process-oriented approaches to strategy classification, their underlying theoretical orientations and implications for research methods and 'teachability' of CS, the reader is referred to Yule and Tarone's chapter in this volume.

Communication strategies and SLA

SLA researchers' interest in experienced communication problems and their solutions, rather than efficient L2 use generally, is linked to the designated object of SLA research, the L2 learner. Relative to native speakers' linguistic competence, learners' *interlanguage* is deficient by definition. Such deficient competence gives rise to problems when the learner wishes to express a particular communicative intention in L2 and lacks the necessary resources for it. Yet the learner's dilemma, in and of itself, is an issue of L2 production – or, in a wider perspective, communication – and not immediately connected to L2 acquisition, unless there is a theory that explains why problem-solving activity in the form of CS is relevant to L2 learning.

Early work on CS discussed (though never empirically examined) the potential learning effect of CS. Adopting a hypothesis-testing model of L2 acquisition, Færch and Kasper (1980) argued that some strategic solutions may be incorporated into the learners' interlanguage: among the 'psycholinguistic', learner-internal strategies, (over-)generalization, transfer, or 'word coinage' ('morphological creativity', Poulisse, 1987) were seen as possible candidates, especially if such strategies elicited positive feedback. 'Interactional' strategies such as appeals for the interlocutor's assistance were seen as beneficial because they might prompt the desired lexical item from the other participant and make it available for incorporation into the learner's interlanguage lexicon. Appeals can serve to clarify productive and receptive problems, and the latter category has been pivotal in a different approach to L2 learning, Krashen's input theory (e.g., Krashen, 1985).

One of the central empirical problems arising from input theory is how learners can access comprehensible input. The most effective source of input seems to be conversational exchanges in which learners engage – either together with other L2 learners or native speakers – and in which they negotiate (referential) meanings (Ellis, 1994; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, for review). Interactional modification, or conversational adjustments, such as confirmation checks, comprehension checks, and clarification requests operate on input which is too far ahead of the learner's current interlanguage competence and size it down to what the learner can manage. Since 'negotiation of meaning' is a joint enterprise between the learner and her interlocutor(s), the

learner exerts a fair amount of control over just how much modification of the original input is needed in order to comprehend the interlocutor's contribution. While interactional CS are thus seen as directly beneficial to L2 learning because they serve to make input comprehensible, Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) point out that all CS are helpful for acquisition because they enable learners to keep the conversation going and thereby provide more opportunities for input. Since psycholinguistic CS may be taken up as appeals, especially when they are flagged by 'strategy markers' such as increased dysfluency (Færch & Kasper, 1984), they can trigger negotiating activity and elicit processible input.

According to a substantial modification of input theory, comprehensible input is a necessary but not sufficient condition for L2 acquisition. As Swain (1985) demonstrated, despite ample availability of comprehensible input, learners may not acquire the expected level of proficiency unless they are forced to produce complex comprehensible utterances. CS, and especially the 'psycholinguistic' type where the learner relies on her own linguistic and strategic resources, are an important vehicle in producing 'pushed output', and in eliciting feedback on the strategic problem solution.

There is yet another theoretical vantage point from which CS are relevant for L2 learning. According to Bialystok's two-dimensional model of language use and development (Bialystok, 1990; Bialystok & Ryan, 1985), language acquisition proceeds from unanalysed to analysed knowledge and with an increasing degree of processing control. The cognitive taxonomy of CS proposed by the Nijmegen Project (e.g., Kellerman et al., 1987) can be mapped onto this model so that CS can be categorized as operating principally on either the 'analysis' or the 'control' dimension (Bialystok, 1990; Kellerman & Bialystok, this volume). An analytic strategy by definition requires that the learner has an explicit understanding of the conceptual features of the intended referent, whereas the decision on the type of strategy to opt for and how to apply CS sequentially (e.g., Kellerman et al., 1990), and to do all this in a timely and effective manner, are issues of processing control. Learners who use CS efficiently, then, display a high degree of processing control, and this is precisely what helps them compensate for lexical gaps, or for a low level of analysis of pertinent lexical items.

Despite their primary function in L2 communication rather than learning, there is a close connection between CS and L2

acquisition in SLA theories which emphasize the roles of input, output, feedback, and cognitive processing. Whether conceptualized as a cooperative venture or a purely cognitive process, the increased need to solve problems in establishing reference is both characteristic of language learners and instrumental in propelling their interlanguage forward.

Focus on lexis

Whereas no definition of CS limits the concept to any particular type of linguistic problem, in actual research practice researchers of different theoretical persuasions have focused on lexical difficulties. The concentration on lexis is an immediate consequence of the definitional criterion of problematicity and the related issue of awareness. CS had been defined by Tarone (1977) as 'conscious' and by Færch and Kasper (1980, 1983d) as 'potentially conscious', allowing the possibility that a speaker or hearer may not always be aware of using a CS but can become conscious of it after the fact, or that repeatedly used CS may become routinized. An early study by Glahn (1980) on the use of retrospective protocols in interlanguage research demonstrated that the criterion of 'consciousness' imposed a filter on possible candidates for CS. Glahn's subjects carried out a picture description task in L2 French and were asked to comment retrospectively on their choices of adjective morphology and vocabulary. Whereas subjects provided extensive comments on their problems in lexical knowledge and retrieval and the CS they adopted to solve them, they were unable to report on their morphological choices, even after they had been asked to focus their attention on adjective morphology in a second session of the experiment. The instruction did not seem to affect subjects' allocation of attention, or not to a sufficient extent: in order to accomplish their task, subjects needed to focus on the linguistic material with the highest information load and apparently had little attentional capacity left to select morphological markings consciously. Glahn's findings do not suggest that attention in speech production to redundant grammatical features is not possible, but they do indicate that unless learners' lexical knowledge is fairly adequate to the task at hand and their control of processing well developed, attentional capacity cannot be freed and reallocated.

Whatever conscious problem-solving learners may engage in when their morphological or syntactic knowledge is defective or uncertain, it seems marginal in information-focused tasks and difficult to operationalize. Lexical CS, on the other hand, are more readily identifiable:

1. Some CS types (paraphrase, circumlocution, and all interactional strategies) are overtly strategic, while other interlanguage productions (transfer, generalization, word coinage) are good candidates for CS, especially when the resulting lexical item is not part of the L2 lexicon.
2. A problematic slot for lexical selection or the CS itself may be flagged by strategy markers such as increased hesitation or identified through retrospective verbal report.

While the focus on lexical CS is thus to some extent an artifact of definition and empirical identifiability, it has obvious merits in its own right. Understanding lexical CS is particularly valuable because they are ubiquitously used – not only by L2 learners, as pointed out by CS researchers early on (Blum-Kulka & Levenston, 1983; Færch & Kasper, 1983d; Kellerman et al., 1987; Poulisse, 1990; Wagner, 1983) and as witnessed by the chapters in this book. In order to appreciate the full range of lexical strategic competence, however, a shift is necessary from L2 *learning* to a particular condition of *communication.* This condition is one where a speaker wishes to label a concept for which she does not have the lexical resources, or where these resources are available but cannot be recalled, or where available and retrievable resources cannot be used successfully because of contextual constraints. Here are some examples of each category (cf. Kellerman et al., 1987, p. 101):

Lexical item unavailable:

discourse domain unfamiliar to native speaker
child language
L2 interlanguage
L1 attrition
pidgins
non-lexicalized concept, e.g., in translation (when a concept is lexicalized in the source language but not in the target language) or lexical innovation

Lexical item irretrievable:
any unimpaired language user (e.g., tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon)
aphasic language users
Context constraints:
expert–novice interaction
listener's/reader's limited comprehension (children, L2 learners, recipients experiencing language loss, recipients lacking domain-specific concepts or lexis)
word definitions in monolingual dictionaries, e.g., through paraphrase, exemplification, semantically related lexical items (synonyms, antonyms, etc.)
games and quizzes where players have to guess words (or referents).

Since productive lexical CS are used by all speakers or writers for a variety of purposes, they constitute an important component of any language user's strategic competence. But while some lexical CS are general in the sense that they are not particularly tied to *lexical* problem-solving – for instance, paraphrasing or substituting can operate at the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic level – others operate directly on lexical knowledge and nowhere else. This is true for strategies which rely on contiguous, contrastive and hierarchical relationships between word meanings, and strategies building on rules for word formation, such as compounding, pre- and suffixation, shift of word class, or inflectional derivation. Such strategies operate in a modular fashion, lending support to the hypothesis that lexical knowledge itself is organized in a separate module.

There is thus a close link between strategies compensating for lexical deficiencies and strategies for acquiring lexis. Such strategies both exploit and develop semantic connections in the learner's mental lexicon and her knowledge of and skill in L2 word formation. They thus require analysed lexical knowledge to operate on, and at the same time expand, the lexical component of learners' analysed interlanguage knowledge. While some authors deny a constructive role for CS in lexical acquisition (e.g., Kellerman, 1991), others emphasize their usefulness for precisely this purpose (Nation, 1990). Consequently, on the much debated issue of whether CS should be 'taught' (e.g., Dörnyei, 1995; Mosiori, 1991; Yule & Tarone, this volume), two strong arguments

can be made in favour of incorporating lexical CS into an L2 teaching programme: a subset of psycholinguistic strategies helps develop learners' analysed lexical knowledge, and interactional strategies can serve to supply new lexical material in unanalysed or analysed form.

In our view, the narrow focus on lexical CS has been advantageous. It has allowed researchers to identify sets of CS, and to develop different theoretical models to account for the behaviours labelled as 'CS' . Comparison of two approaches, as offered by Yule and Tarone (this volume), has proved to be a useful method for clarifying underlying assumptions, theoretical perspectives, differences in research design and categorization of data, and assessment of instructional benefits. To some extent, questions of universal availability and sequential application of CS have also been examined (Deutsch et al. and Russell, both this volume). These issues clearly deserve more attention in future research, because too little is known about CS employed by L1 and L2 speakers with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (though see Dickson et al., 1977).

Consistent with the early work on CS in non-native speaker production, this section has focused on *lexical* problem-solving strategies. Yet the relevant psychological literature and the more recent studies on non-native speakers' CS use inspired by that research, examine *referential* strategies. These are not just two labels for the same thing: 'lexical' suggests a semantic view, whereas 'referential' suggests a pragmatic view of CS. And indeed, the focus on different analytical levels of language and language use reflects the traditional epistemological orientations of second language acquisition research and cognitive psychology, whether in their intra- or interindividual varieties. Consistent with their concern for the acquisition and use of second *language* knowledge by L2 learners, interlanguage researchers have a prime interest in uncovering the *linguistic* resources activated by L2 learners when their required *linguistic* (L2) knowledge, such as vocabulary, is insufficient to the purpose at hand. Just what the linguistic resources are that learners draw on to compensate for lexical deficiencies provides a window on the current state of their interlanguage knowledge and is therefore a worthy candidate for close examination.

Early work on referential communication, on the other hand, examined the referring strategies of fully competent adult native

speakers – indeed, the designation 'native speaker' is never used because 'native speakerness' is taken for granted unless the contrary is specifically stated. Emphasis is given to the *cognitive* strategies underlying speakers' utterances, their changing assessments of the task requirements and concomitant adjustments of goal-oriented strategic behaviour, whereas little analysis is performed of the actual linguistic resources by which the strategies are implemented (but see Bongaerts et al., 1987; Carroll, 1980).

More recently, the concerns with linguistic resources on the one hand and cognitive processing on the other have crossed disciplinary boundaries. As several contributions to this volume demonstrate, second language acquisition researchers have examined CS within models of cognitive processing, while psychologists interested in child bilingualism have conducted close analyses of bilingual children's linguistic resources and observed the development of their dual linguistic knowledge and its use in referential communication tasks (see Deutsch et al., this volume).

Research methodology

The theoretical and analytical perspective adopted by investigators inevitably leads to differences in research methodology. The 'psychostrategist' tinkers carefully with all sorts of quantifiable variables. Because strategies are considered to be underlying psychological processes with no logical necessity for their behavioural outcomes to be clearly observable in speech, these researchers have had resort to tightly constrained methods of eliciting copious strategy tokens. The first method consists of posing language problems which subjects (note the terminology) have trouble solving; 'communicating' the carefully selected household object depicted in a photograph or drawing so that it can be identified by an imaginary person will result in a flood of strategies of the periphrastic kind (Bialystok, 1983b; Poulisse, 1990). Attempts to diminish the artificiality of such tasks have embraced story telling (though the story is usually the experimenter's with its carefully seeded lexical traps; cf. Dechert, 1983; Poulisse, 1990), descriptions of procedures like 'how to prepare/assemble a ...' (Wagner, 1983; Yule & Tarone, 1990) and referential communication tasks involving novel abstract figures (Bongaerts et al., 1987; Russell, this volume). These are easy and reliable ways to collect data, and since they face

different sorts of subjects with a common set of problems they are ideal for studying the effects of single variables on performance (language proficiency or linguistic/cultural background, for instance). However, because of their artificiality they seem to have allowed the 'sociostrategists' to occupy the high moral ground (see for instance the critiques offered by Yule and Tarone, and Rampton, in this volume of the typical tasks used by psychostrategists; also Lloyd for a justification). Fortunately, to redress the balance a little, analysis of strategy use in authentic and quasi-natural conversations has also been undertaken (Haastrup & Phillipson, 1983; Poulisse, 1990), but since the experimenter now has considerably less control over what subjects will say, so the surface manifestations of strategy use become more difficult to track down. This is where retrospective commentary by subjects of their own (videotaped) performance has proved useful. Here again, the use of conversation as one source of data is evidence of a desire to put hypotheses to the test in a situation that is more 'ecologically valid'. But even though the use of strategies is studied in spontaneous conversations, the goal is now not so much to understand the mechanics of interaction as to search for the commonalities that underlie strategic behaviour across tasks, to study the adaptations a speaker makes in terms of each task type (e.g., +/− interlocutor), and come to grips with the methodological issues involved in studying underlying processes in tasks with varying degrees of externally imposed control.

This volume

Recent work on CS in second language studies has increasingly recognized work in related fields such as sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. While the chapters by second language researchers in this volume reflect this wider interest, we also thought it important to include a leavening of chapters by researchers in those fields whose work we believe should inform our own, even if they do not make use of or need the concept of *communication strategy* themselves. These latter contributions touch on referential communication, child bilingualism, mother tongue education, normal native adult interaction and language pathology. By considering what they have to say, second language researchers interested in communication strategies may acquire a

broader understanding of the second language phenomena that interest them. At the same time, we would naturally like to think that the intellectual traffic will not be entirely one way, and that scholars in other fields may also benefit from exposure to some of the second language work currently being undertaken, as represented in this volume.

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PART ONE

Psycholinguistic perspectives

The chapters in Part I have two things in common: they take a psycholinguistic, intraorganism view on CS (or contrast such a view with alternative positions), and they discuss or adopt as a model for analysis the CS taxonomy developed by the Nijmegen group (Kellerman et al., 1987). The first two chapters clarify some fundamental conceptual and theoretical issues in CS research and can thus be seen as further introductions to the book.

Yule and Tarone contrast the Nijmegen approach with a perspective on CS that emphasizes interaction, output strategies and teachability. They consider that an appropriate methodology for studying CS involves inspecting the differences between non-native and native speakers of the second language in performing linguistic tasks. These differences, which will very largely involve linguistic form, can function as the basis of appropriate pedagogical intervention by identifying areas where learners are in need of help in performing such tasks.

Based on Bialystok's two-dimensional model of language skills, *Kellerman and Bialystok* argue that non-native speakers' CS are just special cases of a wider class of strategic behaviours that characterize all language activity, adult or child, native or non-native, normal or pathological. This view of CS exposes the commonalities underlying all linguistic processing and considers a narrow focus on second language learners/non-native speakers as potentially obfuscating.

In her chapter, *Poulisse* seeks to explain the task effects on CS use found in the Nijmegen studies. Parallel to Kellerman and Bialystok's claim that CS are special cases of language as a fundamentally strategic activity, Poulisse argues that CS use abides by such universal principles as Grice's Cooperative Principle, Leech's

principles of textual rhetoric, and Simon's 'satisficing' principle. These principles are implemented differentially in strategy use depending on task demands. Poulisse further demonstrates that self-corrections of slips of the tongue and automatic codeswitches are also guided by these principles. Irrespective of speaker status (e.g., native or non-native), the choices made in speech production appear to reflect the same principles of communication.

Russell's chapter reports on a replication of an earlier experiment in foreign language referential communication. Japanese learners of English participated both as L1 and L2 speakers when performing descriptions of abstract shapes. Following Kellerman et al. (1990), Russell shows that there is evidence for a hierarchy of strategies irrespective of language used: speakers prefer to describe a shape holistically either by analogy or geometric shape ('a rhomboid/a diamond'), then, if linguistic means are lacking, to partition it ('two triangles/two roofs attached at the base'), and finally, if all else fails, to linearize the figure by describing it literally like a set of route directions. While there is thus some support for a cross-linguistically valid CS sequence, Russell's study also suggests possible language- and culture-specific variation which requires further exploration.

Stemmer and Joanette extend the scope of enquiry to CS use by aphasic patients. Examining CS use at the phonological, morphosyntactic, syntactic, and lexico-semantic level, the authors find that both conceptual and code compensatory strategies are used to express a target item. While there is no systematic preference for either strategy type at any processing level, the type of aphasia appears to influence strategy choice to some extent. Consistent with previous chapters in this section, Stemmer and Joanette note that aphasic patients use the same types of CS as unimpaired speakers.

1

Investigating communication strategies in L2 reference: pros and cons

GEORGE YULE and ELAINE TARONE

Introduction

In the decade since the publication of the then state-of-the-art collection of papers on communication strategies in Færch and Kasper (1983a), there has been continued interest in the ways in which second language (L2) learners make use of their interlanguage resources in attempting to create L2 reference. The basic challenge has remained essentially the same as that raised by Váradi (1983) a decade earlier when faced with a range of L2 referential expressions for the same observed object (i.e., *balloon, ball, air ball, special toys for children*): how do these observed 'creations' help us better understand what is involved in second language learning and use? While there has always existed a variety of different, though relatively compatible, perspectives on how to go about answering this question, how to conduct investigations and how to characterize the various forms produced by L2 learners, there has emerged, in recent years, a fairly serious challenge to the validity of much of the previous work done in this area.

In essence, there has been a marked divergence of opinion between those who are prompted by their investigations to propose additional categories, maintaining and expanding existing taxonomies (e.g., Tarone & Yule, 1987), and those who are prompted to deny the value of existing taxonomies and to propose a substantial reduction in the number of categories of analysis (e.g., Bongaerts et al., 1987). For ease of reference, let us characterize the first group as being rather profligate ('the Pros') in their liberal expansion of categories, and the second group as being rather conservative ('the Cons'), given their emphasis on parsimony. There are, of course, other differences in the focus of each

of these two groups, with the Pros often exhibiting a preference for investigating variability in linguistic performance while the Cons emphasize the generalizability and psychological plausibility of their categories.

The noted divergence in analytic preference is accompanied by an equally marked divergence of views on the pedagogical implications of the research findings, with the Pros typically in favour of teaching the use of some communication strategies (e.g., Tarone, 1984) and the Cons expressing a strong opposition to any such teaching (e.g., Kellerman, 1991).

For students and teachers in the many fields related to second or foreign language education and research, this marked divergence of opinion may present a rather puzzling problem. If they choose to follow one school of thought, their research or teaching may be subject to criticism from those holding opposite views. If that potential opposition is interpreted as a source of conflict, then the whole area may be avoided, both in research and teaching. This would not be a desirable outcome. In this chapter, we will attempt to clarify the source of this puzzling situation, which may help researchers and teachers to decide, on the basis of their identified *goals*, how to approach the empirical data involved in L2 reference.

Pros and Cons

The most obvious way in which the two approaches differ is in the number of strategies considered necessary. Although some variation can be found in the terms employed by both groups as they developed their analytic frameworks over time, it is possible to capture the essential distinctions. In the typical taxonomic approach favoured by the Pros, there are both reduction strategies and achievement strategies recognized. Reduction strategies are associated with avoiding, changing or abandoning a communicative goal when faced with a perceived communication difficulty. Achievement strategies, also called compensatory strategies, are characterized by the use of alternative communicative resources (e.g., approximation, circumlocution, language transfer, word coinage) when faced with a perceived communication difficulty. Description and exemplification of these and related strategies can be found in Bialystok (1990), Færch and Kasper (1983d),

Paribakht (1985) and Tarone (1977). In opposing this taxonomic approach, a more recent perspective, favoured by the Cons, has focused on only compensatory strategies, divided into two types described as conceptual and code. A conceptual strategy is either holistic (i.e., using a term for a related substitute concept) or analytic (i.e., describing properties of the referent), whereas a code strategy involves using purely linguistic devices (i.e., L1 words, neologisms). Description and exemplification of these strategies can be found in Bialystok (1990), Bongaerts and Poulisse (1989), Kellerman (1991) and Kellerman, Ammerlaan, Bongaerts and Poulisse (1990).

Underlying these two different sets of descriptive terms is a fundamental difference in analytic perspective. The taxonomic approach of the Pros focuses on descriptions of the language produced by L2 learners, essentially characterizing the means used to accomplish reference in terms of the observed forms. It is primarily a description of observed forms in L2 output, with implicit inferences being made about the differences in the psychological processing that produced them. The alternative approach of the Cons focuses on a description of the psychological processes used by L2 learners, essentially characterizing the cognitive decisions humans make in order to accomplish reference. It is primarily a description of cognitive processing, with implicit inferences being made about the inherent similarity of linguistically different forms observed in the L2 output. The focus of the Pros is on the external and interactive while the focus of the Cons is on the internal and cognitive. In more familiar terms, it might be said that the Pros attempt to work from performance data to consider underlying competence while the Cons seek to characterize underlying competence in order to account for performance data.

Given this version of the Pros and Cons, it should be possible to treat the dichotomous categorization of processing possibilities (conceptual vs code) as 'a higher order description' (Bialystok, 1990, p. 114) that could be combined with the taxonomy of more specific instantiations devised to describe the linguistic performance of L2 learners. This type of compromise might take a form such as that presented in Figure 1.1 (overleaf). Although the combination of categories presented in Figure 1.1 may help clarify the relationship between the approaches of the Pros and Cons, it actually disguises a number of serious methodological and pedagogical differences that require further consideration.

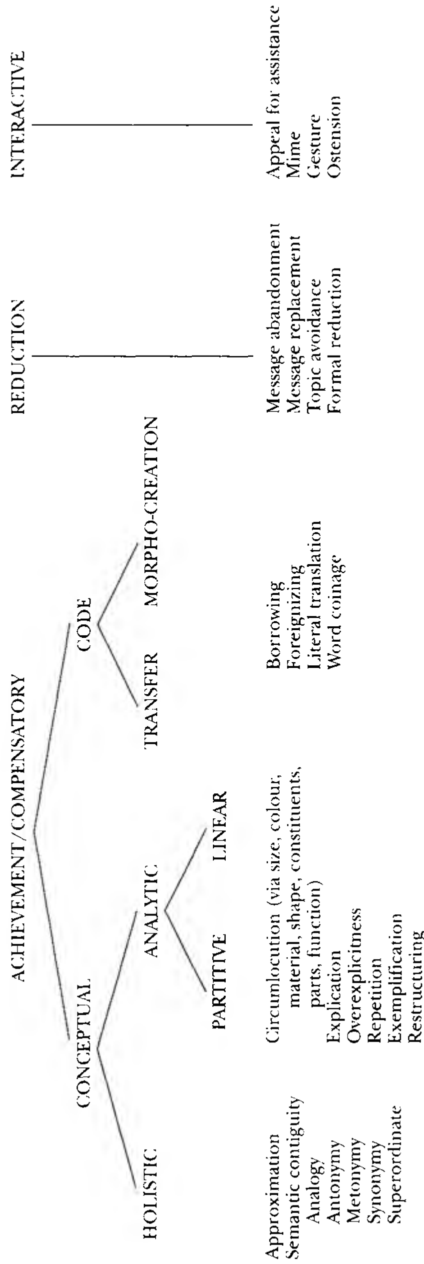

Figure 1.1 Types of communication strategy

Creating L2 reference

It is normally agreed that, as part of their general communicative competence, all adult language users make use of strategic competence or 'the mastery of communication strategies that may be called into action either to enhance the effectiveness of communication or to compensate for breakdowns in communication' (Swain, 1984, p. 189). Although the interest in most studies is in the types of communication strategies used by L2 learners, it has been emphasized (Kellerman, 1991; Yule & Tarone, 1990) that native speakers also employ communication strategies in their L1. This recognition of L1 communication strategy use has influenced research thinking in two quite distinct ways.

For the Cons, the relevant L1 has been the learner's L1. In their study of Dutch learners of English, Kellerman et al. (1990) reported that there was an overwhelming similarity between the strategies used in Dutch (the L1) and those used in English (the L2) immediately afterwards by the same speakers, when the same referential task was performed in that sequence. No results were reported for the reverse sequence. Moreover, there was a consistent hierarchical relationship among the strategies used, with the holistic being preferred over the analytic (only higher order descriptive categories were used). The advantage of this approach is in terms of the opportunity provided to ascertain the influence of a predisposition from a learner's L1 experience in the process of creating L2 reference. One example presented to illustrate the similarity of conceptual strategy used in describing an abstract shape is shown as (1), with the L1 version followed by the L2 version of the same speaker (from Kellerman et al., 1990, p. 175).

(1) (L1) De vorm van een hoefijzer ('The shape of a horseshoe')
(L2) Erm, this is the figure that erm I do not know how they call it in English ... but it is the same figure. It has the same form as ... the things that horses wear under their feet, the iron things.

Using the Cons' analytic framework, we would say that this speaker uses the same ('holistic') approach to the task in both L1 and L2 versions. From this perspective, it is easy to see why the Cons might argue that strategic competence should not be taught. The L2 learner, producing the descriptions in (1), already knows

how to use a holistic strategy to refer to the abstract shape in the L1 and can also use a similar holistic strategy in the L2 version. The use of a holistic strategy does not need to be taught. The observable linguistic differences in (1) between the actual forms used to encode the act of reference in the L1 versus the L2 are not considered significant in the Cons' approach.

However, such differences are what the Pros' approach tends to consider extremely interesting. The speaker in (1) has created a means of L2 reference via circumlocution using available higher-frequency L2 vocabulary when a specific, lower-frequency, vocabulary item was not known. If this learner used such a compensatory strategy in interaction with a native speaker of English, it would not only have a high chance of accomplishing successful reference, but also would be likely to elicit the specific vocabulary item ('Oh, you mean horseshoes') that the learner might wish to know. In fact, for the Pros, it is useful to compare the linguistic forms used by L2 learners and those used by native speakers of the target language for at least three reasons:

1. This comparison yields information about the structure of the learner's interlanguage grammar/lexis as compared to that of the native speaker of the target.
2. This information is helpful in understanding the relative success or effectiveness of learners' communication strategies as these are used in interactions.
3. This information can shed light on the way in which a learner's use of communication strategies in interaction can elicit the relevant 'negotiated input' from others (cf. Yule & Tarone, 1991).

As the reconsideration of the data in (1) suggests, the Pros' approach has focused on the relationship between similarities and differences in the expressions used by L2 learners and by native speakers of the *target* language. The relevant L1 for the Pros is not that of the learner, but that of the target language (TL) speakers. In their study of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Spanish learners of English, Yule and Tarone (1990) reported on the wide range of differences, as well as similarities, between strategies used by learners and native speakers of English on the same tasks (only lower-order categories were used).

In that study, both the L2 learners and the native speakers of the TL were given a task which required that they make reference to

Table 1.1 Referring expressions used for one part of a coffee pot

	Native speakers of English
(E2)	an object that it looks kinda like a thin metal long object with two disks both circular disk type objects on both ends one was smaller than the other one
(E4)	a device that caps the container but also has a plunger
(E6)	a sort of a I don't know what it is but on top had a round thing
(E8)	the strainer I'm not sure what it's called ... metal ... metal object with a long part that goes into the coffee pot
	L2 learners of English
(S2)	another device which belong this object
(S6)	a look like two circles flat circles?
(S7)	a top and the top has a pole in the middle and in the top of this pole there are a little s like a little plate
(S9)	another piece which consist in two plates with a teeny piece of metal
(S11)	the thing that you close has a round thing in the top
(S12)	the little stick in the top of the cover
(C1)	tick ... something like a ticket but head narr like a circle
(C2)	the cover the cover is a special kind of cover
(C3)	a cover
(J1)	cover
(J2)	the top the top is made ...
(J3)	a lid
(K3)	cap

real-world objects which were often unfamiliar to both groups of subjects. Table 1.1 presents the referring expressions used by the native speakers and the L2 learners of English as all attempted to refer to the metal inner workings of a Melior coffee pot.

It is clear from Table 1.1 that native speakers of English as well as L2 learners of English made use of communication strategies to refer to the object in question. Further, a similar general approach to the problem can be seen on the part of many subjects; for example, the use of an analytic strategy is shared by the two speakers in examples (2) and (3).

(2) (E2) an object that it looks like kinda like a thin metal long object with two disks both circular disk type objects on both ends one was smaller than the other one

(3) (S7) a top and the top has a pole in the middle and in the top of this pole there are a little s like a little plate

However, while an analysis within the Cons' framework might stop here, arguing that the underlying cognitive process was clearly the same and the differences in realization were merely surface differences, the Pros' analysis would pinpoint exactly where those surface linguistic differences lay, for these are precisely the differences which help to highlight the unique characteristics of the learner's interlanguage, as well as the way in which communication strategies can function in interaction between learners and native speakers to produce both successful transactions and negotiated input.

First, an analysis of the language used by learners and native speakers in Table 1.1 shows that the native speakers mostly seem to employ a somewhat larger subtechnical vocabulary than the L2 learners, using terms like *disk, plunger* and *strainer.* The learners' vocabulary, including *plate, circles, pole* and *stick,* tends to involve more implicit analogies. In this task, the native speakers can also be seen to use more analytic strategies, producing a greater volume of talk, than the learners who generally favour more holistic strategies. A general distinction can also be noted between the Spanish L1 learners who produce descriptive phrases and the Chinese, Japanese and Korean learners who prefer to use single lexical items to accomplish reference.

Another advantage of this approach is in terms of the opportunity provided to discover the ways in which learners use more versus less effective strategies in their attempts to create L2 reference, with the baseline of TL native speakers' attempts as a guide. Thus, for an object that all native speakers described successfully as a *tape dispenser,* there were clearly unsuccessful learner responses (*I don't know what this name*), some rather vague holistic (*an object designed to put another object*) and analytic strategies (*this is object, the measure is approximately three inch length and one half inch height ...*), as well as relatively successful L2 creations (*a device to put Scotch tape*). The concept of 'successful' or 'effective' strategy use is not addressed in the Cons' approach and will be reconsidered in the following section.

The point of eliciting L1 data from native speakers, as well as learners, within the Pros' approach, is to have some clear (and not idealized) illustrations of the target behaviour of L2 learners and to note the ways in which native speakers organize and manipulate certain types of general vocabulary when specific referring expressions are not available. Such data are clearly relevant in terms of

the pedagogical orientation of the Pros' approach, as will be discussed in a later section.

Methodological issues

While both approaches described thus far have used research designs intended to elicit the creation of L2 reference under controlled conditions, there are notable differences in aspects of their methodologies. Taking Yule and Tarone (1990) and Kellerman et al. (1990) as representatives of the Pros and Cons respectively, we can point to some of those differences (summarized in Table 1.2, below).

1. As noted already, the Cons' approach uses learners as their own controls, with L1 performance being compared to L2 performance. The Pros' approach generally fails to elicit L1 performances and only compares the learners' L2 performance with that of TL native speakers. These differences in data base make sense given the fundamental differences in analytical perspective. The Cons' primary interest is in describing internal cognitive processes, whether in L1 or L2. The Pros are interested primarily in describing the forms used by L2 learners to accomplish reference in a given language, in comparison to the forms used by native speakers of that language for the same purpose.

2. To elicit L2 reference, the Cons in this study used abstract shapes whereas the Pros used real-world objects. Not all Cons' studies used abstract shapes in their elicitation tasks, as Poulisse (1990) demonstrates. However, the central focus of this study, comparing L1 and L2 strategies, is based solely on the abstract shape task. The effect of these different types of prompt can be seen in the data elicited. In describing abstract shapes, the L2 referring expressions often take the form of analogies (e.g., *horseshoes* in (1)). After analogies, speakers next used descriptions of parts of the shape (*two triangles ... their bases are ... put together*). In describing real-world objects, the L2 referring expressions more typically begin by naming (*it's a brush*). After naming, speakers tend to use descriptions of the object's possible function (*for comb the hair*) as well as its parts (*it has a handle*) and other features (*made of wood*). It is important to recognize that these differences in types of elicitation prompt will result in different patterns of L2

reference. The more abstract the prompt, the more likely that conceptually related analogies will be used. The more concrete and familiar the prompt, the more likely that simple names and everyday functions will be mentioned. This type of difference will contribute to the strong task-related effect on communication strategy use noted by Poulisse (1990) and Poulisse and Schils (1989). It may be that future investigations of L2 reference will have to include both abstract and concrete referents (cf. Paribakht, 1985) to explore fully learners' strategies and language in creating L2 reference. Greater recognition may also have to be given to the fact that claims about the nature of L2 referential communication are necessarily claims about L2 reference *on the specific task* faced by the learner.

3. A related difference involves the presence of a listener or not while the learner is attempting to create L2 reference. For the Cons, there seems to have been no need for a listening partner in the shape-identification task. In some earlier reports where the Cons' studies *have* included a same L1 listening partner (e.g., Bongaerts et al., 1987; Poulisse & Schils, 1989), the results seem to lend support to the idea that there is an interlocutor-effect on choice of linguistic means used to accomplish reference (cf. examples where a local dialect of the Dutch L1 is used by participants in Bongaerts et al., 1987). However, the focus of the Cons on internal cognitive processes has resulted in no role for interlocutor-effects in more recent analytic frameworks.

For the Pros, a different LI listening partner was present, performing an identification task, and able to give non-verbal feedback. In these circumstances, very few L1-related references were found. The presence of a listener, with a specific purpose dependent on the effectiveness of the learner's L2 reference, has a strong effect on the type of strategy and language used. As Tarone and Yule emphasize elsewhere (1989), within the Pros' approach, the nature and role of the addressee are seen as powerful influences on the speaker's performance, and by inference, may have a profound influence on the cognitive processes underlying that performance. It may be necessary in future studies to incorporate both a concern with the psychological processing of the individual speaker, performing in isolation, and an awareness of the sociocultural impact on that processing when the speaker has to make decisions concerning the knowledge, status and needs of the addressee involved in order to choose the best referential strategy.

We must also recognize that the presence of an addressee creates a quite different context for strategy use, allowing certain 'interactive strategies' (Tarone, 1977), such as appeal for assistance and mime to have referring function. While the Cons' approach categorizes mime as a conceptual strategy and ostension as a code strategy, distinguishing between the assumed psychological processes involved, the Pros would argue that those processes will necessarily be constrained by the speaker's assessment of the particular addressee's knowledge and status in the local interactive context.

4. On a more general level, there is a notable difference in the L2 learner population typically involved in the different approaches. The Cons have used only Dutch L1 subjects, which has the advantage of simplifying the elicitation of L1 performance on the task. The disadvantage may be that the performance of learners from a single L1 background, which is remarkably close, geographically, historically and socio-culturally, to English as the L2, will not generalize to the larger, extremely diverse, population of L2 learners around the world. For example, unlike Bongaerts et al. (1987), Chen (1990) found absolutely no code (or L1-based) strategies used by her Chinese subjects addressing English native speakers. The Pros have included learners from a variety of L1 backgrounds and essentially created cross-cultural communication dyads of non-shared L1s in their investigation. One result of this latter research design is, of course, a great reduction in the use of L1-based strategies. In addition, it can lead, for example, to the discovery of a strong tendency among Chinese L2 learners initially to attempt avoidance strategies (*sorry I don't know*) in the particular L2 reference task presented. It may be that more awareness of potentially diverse socio-cultural effects on L2 performance will have to be kept in mind in designing future studies of L2 referential communication, with more diverse L1 performances on tasks also elicited.

Pedagogical issues

Generally speaking, those adopting the Cons' approach see no point in teaching communication strategies, with some quite explicit statements against the notion: 'What one must teach students of a language is not strategy, but language' (Bialystok, 1990, p. 147) and 'Teach the learners more language and let the strategies

Table 1.2 Summary of differences between Pros and Cons

Pros	Cons
1. Profligate, liberal expansion of categories	Conservative, parsimonious reduction of categories
2. Taxonomic description of observed forms in output, external and interactive	Description of underlying psychological process, internal and cognitive
3. L2 learner performance compared to TL native speaker performance; many differences found	L2 learner performance compared to their own L1 performance: many similarities found
4. Elicitation prompts are real-world objects	Elicitation prompts are abstract shapes
5. Listening partner, with a purpose, present	No listening partner present
6. L2 learners with different L1s; L1s mostly dissimilar to TL	L2 learners with same L1; L1 very similar to TL
7. Communication strategies should be taught	Communication strategies should not be taught

look after themselves' (Kellerman, 1991, p. 158). It should be noted that such statements are not made on the basis of an educational research project by the Cons to find out whether teaching has a beneficial effect or not. To understand this opposition, it has to be understood that strategies employed in creating L2 reference are perceived within the Cons' approach to be essentially cognitive processes and that teaching them would amount to an attempt to teach cognitive processing. For adult learners, that cognitive processing is believed to have already matured through their L1 experience and hence need not be taught. Stated another way, L2 learners are already assumed to have sufficient *competence* from L1 learning to implement their chosen strategies and simply need to be taught the L2 linguistic forms which will enable them to *perform* that competence. There would appear to be no place in this perspective for the idea that developing L2 competence might come about as a result of L2 performance in successfully accomplishing L2 reference. via

communication strategies in a classroom activity designed to promote strategy use.

It is possible to view the situation quite differently and to operate with the assumption that, in strategic terms, performance creates competence. Such an assumption seems to lie behind the Pros' approach. Generally speaking, those adopting the Pros' approach have been in favour of teaching communication strategies (e.g., Dörnyei et al., 1992; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1991; Nattinger, 1988; Tarone, 1984; Tarone & Yule, 1989; Willems, 1987). It may simply be that this perspective is based on an assumed taxonomy of lower-order categories within which some strategies are perceived to be more effective than others in accomplishing L2 reference in specific circumstances. It may also be that the concept of 'teaching language' is viewed quite differently by the Pros. Rather than treating the L2 as something that is simply provided by teachers to learners, much recent thinking in L2 pedagogy has emphasized the provision of classroom activities and tasks in which learners develop a range of abilities in the L2. The language learned via such tasks may be unpredictable and may vary from one learner to the next. By employing tasks which introduce and foster different types of communication strategy, the Pros' approach not only promotes greater awareness, less inhibition and purposeful language practice, it provides relevant learner-produced L2 linguistic performances which can be reflected on later with a specific focus on form.

There have been a few studies designed, in one way or another, to assess the value of communication strategy teaching. In one early study by Brodersen and Gibson (1982), Danish learners of English were found to use more achievement and fewer reduction strategies after sessions discussing the effectiveness of strategies used by the learners themselves in tasks which had been videotaped. More recently, Mosiori (1991), focusing on only higher-order categories, reported no significant effects from an experimental study involving consciousness-raising about communication strategies among American undergraduates learning French. In contrast, Dörnyei et al. (1992) reported significant improvement in oral skills among Hungarian learners of English after training in lower-level communication strategy use. It may be that these different results are a reflection of different training situations and different categories of analysis. The definitive study on the value of communicative strategy teaching remains to be done.