

授業における会話方略：学習者の自然なコミュニケーション能力から

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Conversation Strategies in the Classroom: A Look at Students' Natural Communication Skills

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Abstract

本稿では、英語を学ぶ日本人成人グループの会話における分析結果を紹介する。通常、第二言語による相互のやり取りの成立には会話方略を使用することが効果的なため、著者は学習者のやり取りから会話方略の実例を見出そうと調査した。結果、会話方略を学んだことのない学習者が、会話の中で自然にこの方略を使用していたことが判明した。加えて、異なる会話方略が使用されていることも明らかになり、会話の中から有用な事実データも判明した。会話中、他者からの修正は見られなかったが、複数の自己修正の例が認められた。この分析は、著者と学習者との会話に有用であったと同時に、今後の教授法の改善点を導いた。結論では、第二言語の授業における会話方略の使用法をいくつか提言する。

Introduction

Considering successful L2 language learners and what attributes they possess, communication strategies (Dornyei, 1995; Nakatani, 2005; Tarone, 1981) play an important role in effective language use. In this paper, I looked at dialogue recorded from a class of advanced learners of English engaged in small group work and observed their language with one another, making note of how they conversed with one another and whether or not communication strategies were present. For purposes of this paper I considered successful language learners to be those people who are able to use what English abilities they have to

accomplish meaningful interactions during communicative learning tasks. I had been teaching this particular group of students for over ten years and considered them to be very successful learners and communicators. While I had not explicitly taught communication strategies to them, I expected that upon observing their interactions with one another I would find that they naturally used them. Writing this paper provided an opportunity to focus on which particular strategies they tended to use as well as how they used them. As Gebhard and Oprandy (1999) suggest, I tried to hold a beginners mind as I listened to my students' conversations, attempting to let

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go of my preconceived ideas about them and their abilities, in hopes of gaining a new understanding of them and ways that I might be of better service to them as a teacher.

I was also curious to see how the students worked together to arrive at meaning and what level of teamwork and cooperation they demonstrated. Taking the position that students can learn as much or more from each other as from a teacher, I wanted to see how well my students would function in an exercise where they were left to negotiate meaning amongst themselves with minimal outside help.

Literature Review

Tarone (1981) describes communication strategies as related to “a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared (p.288).” Meaning structures, here, can be understood as both linguistic and sociolinguistic. In other words, two people are engaged in communication about a topic which they might not have the necessary language or cultural skills to make themselves fully understood. The strategies that they use to bypass this lack of knowledge to achieve meaning can be termed communication strategies.

A key feature of communication strategies is that they involve two interlocutors and are thus dependent upon both the production and reception of language. Tarone (1981) goes on to distinguish communication strategies from two other types of strategies, production strategies and learning strategies; production

strategies being concerned with how a person prepares output and learning strategies being concerned with how a person acquires knowledge. Both of these other strategies do not necessarily involve two people and can often be accomplished by a single person.

The difference between learning strategies and communication strategies, however, is not always so clear. Dornyei (1995) and Tarone (1981) both suggest that communication strategies can, in fact, also serve as learning strategies. Certainly, within pair and group work where students are left to themselves, the ability to negotiate meaning in communicating with a partner will directly affect how much they will be able to learn from the situation. Tarone (1981) suggests that whether a particular strategy is considered a learning strategy or a communication strategy is largely dependent on the motivations of the person using the strategy.

Communication strategies seem to be naturally used by successful language students and there has been debate (Dornyei, 1995; Nakatani, 2005) as to whether these strategies can be explicitly taught to students. Nakatani (2005), drawing on data collected during action research, suggests that, to some extent, communication strategies can be successfully taught.

If communication strategies can be taught, one possible step in teaching them could be first observing what kind of strategies the students naturally possess and making them aware of these strategies. By helping them to become aware of abilities that they already have, they might be able to use these strate-

gies more effectively. With this idea in mind that I examined my students' interactions with one another and attempted to identify various communication strategies as documented by Dornyei and Nakatani, as well as other behaviors that I thought were effective for communication. I was also specifically interested in examples of self and peer correction (Wong & Waring, 2010) as the students worked together on a specific task.

Methods

The class consisted of five adults, three women and two men, in a classroom in Japan who I considered to be advanced learners of English. The students' native language was Japanese, and they were between the ages of forty and sixty. They were all university graduates who had been placed in advanced classes previously at a language school. For homework, they had been assigned to read a newspaper article regarding a current political situation in Egypt. Adapting an exercise from Folse (2006) where students create two true statements and one false statement and then let their partners guess which one is false, I had the students quickly reread the article and write out three sentences, two true and one false, about the reading. They then were put into two groups, one group of three persons and one group of two persons, and asked to take turns reading their statements to their partners and letting them guess which one was false. They were instructed to focus on major points of the article and not minor details, like specific numbers or statistics. One goal of this task was to

encourage the students to negotiate meaning amongst themselves, pushing them to speak clearly and precisely and as Nation and Newton (2008) write, to make them "more sensitive to their need to be comprehensible (p.98)."

I placed a small tape recorder next to the group with three people and recorded that group's interactions while moving between the groups listening and occasionally offering comments. Afterward, I transcribed the conversation and analyzed it for examples of conversation strategies. In this paper I will present only examples that are pertinent to the discussion and will include the entire transcript as an appendix.

Results and Discussion

- 3) S1 (reading from paper) : Ok. Number one, (0.5) in Tunisia military played, played, almost no role in the transition of power.
Number two, (0.5) Egyptians seems more confused about complicating election system which will last so long.
Number three, (0.5) A presidential election in Egypt will be set for just after the parliamentary election.
- 4) S2: Ahhhh

Here S1 begins to take control of the situation of her own volition. It is her turn to read the sentences and she will be the one throughout the conversation determining the pacing of the exchange. She starts off making eye contact repeatedly with her two listeners and attempting to gauge their understanding

from their facial expressions. This is a kind of modified interaction strategy (Nakatani, 2005) where she is performing comprehension checks with her listeners by making eye contact and gauging their responses. Through her behavior, S1 is essentially asking whether her listeners are following her. She also clearly enunciates the phrases, *number one*, *number two*, and *number three*, followed by short pauses, thus helping her listeners follow what she is saying. S2 then responds with “Ahhh” as a way of confirming his understanding of what she has said.

In this section also, S1 was already demonstrating self-correction by repeating the word “played.” While she had pronounced it correctly, she seemed to have some doubt that it was clear and so repeated it.

- 5) S1: Which is... You (0.5) Taron ↑ told not to check the newspaper. hhhhh
- 6) T: >>You can't check the newspaper. << (S2's name), you're not allowed-

Here S1 noticed S2 looking at the article to help which was against the rules of the exercise. This was the first time for S2 to do such an exercise and he did not yet fully understand the rules. S1, while comfortable with holding the conversation seemed to be slightly hesitant to enforce the rules with S2 (an older male) and I interpreted the raising of her voice when she said my name as a request to step in and clarify the rules. This, too, can be seen as an achievement strategy (Dornyei, 1995; Nakatani, 2005) ; S1 was asking for help and, as a result of getting my help, was able to keep the exercise going.

When I told S2 that he could not read the text, I said it quickly and he didn't quite hear me as he was focusing on the text. I then rephrased my statement in a clear but incomplete sentence. On one level, I was recalibrating but on another I was slipping into a kind of language that was over simplistic and probably not necessary. In retrospect, I should have just made sure that I had his attention before explaining the rules. Then I could have used a full sentence with him, thereby giving him a more authentic English experience that he would most likely have understood.

- 7) S2: Ahhh Ahhh False, false is the second
- 8) S1: Boo boo! Hhhhh (indicating his answer was incorrect)
- 9) S2: Ah boo!? Are?
- 10) S3: Ok, once more.

In line 7, S2 seemed to repeat the word *false* as a way of stalling, holding attention while he constructed a sentence. He uses this strategy at various points throughout the exercise.

S1 does a good job of engaging her partners here. Both S2 and S3 are now focused and curious about the correct answer. In line 10, S3 asks for S1 to repeat the sentences, showing that she is actively engaged in deciphering the meaning of the sentences.

- 11) S1: Number one, number one, (0.5) in Tunisia military played almost
- 12) S3: Number one?
- 13) S1: Number one.
- 14) S3: Number one.
- 15) S1: almost no role in the transition of

power.

Again, S1 repeats herself, showing that she is paying attention to her listeners and making sure they are following her. S3 asks for clarification and then, once given, repeats the information to once again confirm. I think S1 and S3 did a good job here of keeping aware of each other's comprehension.

S1 then continues with the sentence at the point where she left off, holding everyone's concentration.

- 15) S1: Number two. (0.5) Egyptians seems seemed more confused about complicating election system which will last so long. True.
16) S3: It's true.

S3 comes in here to agree with S1's statement. This is a kind of maintenance strategy (Nakatani, 2005) where the flow of the conversation is helped by listeners expressing their agreement. Here S3 both encourages S1 to continue and shows her understanding of what was being said.

- 17) S1: Number three. A presidential election in Egypt will be set for just after the par:riamen <<parliamental ↑, parliamentary ↑ >>
18) T: Parliamentary
19) S1: Parliamentary election. Question three. So number two is true.
20) S3: Hmm mmm I think so.
21) S2: True?

S1 begins trying to pronounce the word

parliament and tries to self-correct herself. Additionally, when she is not confident in her pronunciation, she raises her intonation as if asking a question. This was my signal as a teacher to come in and help her with the pronunciation. As she began her sentence, my attention was focused on the other group. By raising her voice, she called my attention to her struggle and I was able to help her. She was able to combine self-correction with the strategy of asking for help.

In line 20, S3 again comes in with a statement of agreement and understanding. S2 seems surprised by the fact that the statement is true and lets the group know by giving his statement the intonation of a question; he then goes on in the next section of dialogue to explain his reasons.

- 22) S2: Ahh I think they don't think it it's complicated.
23) S1: They don't...?
24) S2: I. I think. I think
25) S1: You think? But Egyptian...
26) S2: It is the usual thing they think I I think so I I I [want to ...]
27) T1: [hhh]
28) S1: [hhh]
29) S2: and the third question is very ano important question but in newspaper ehhe after the parliament elections ... after I I think.

In line 22, S2 self-corrects before going on to hold the floor quite well while he tries to form the correct language to express his opinion. This is linguistically difficult for him so,

in line 24 and 26, he repeats the word *I* multiple times. By doing this he both efficiently calls attention to the fact that he is talking about his own personal opinion as well as holds the floor with a time gaining strategy (Dornyei, 1995; Nakatani, 2005). It seems he wanted to say that he understood the facts of S1's statement but he personally disagreed with the nuance of the statement. This much language was difficult for him so by repeatedly calling attention to the word, *I*, he accomplished the same goal and by reducing his statement, demonstrated a kind of interlanguage based reduction strategy (Dornyei, 1995; Nakatani, 2005). Also, by repeating *I*, he uses the word as a filler, thus gaining time while he thinks of how to phrase the rest of his comment. In line 29, he adds two other fillers, *ehhh* and *ano*, and again repeats *I* as he concludes his statement.

I have noticed over the years that S2, while perhaps somewhat less skilled grammatically in English than his classmates, is very good at communicating his opinions. In looking at this section of dialogue, I can see that he is naturally quite proficient in several communication strategies.

- 30) S1: Just after. Just after the parliamentary election a presidential election on Egypt will be set for... just after.
 31) S2: Ahh ah just is...
 32) S1: Soon...
 33) T: It's shortly after because actually they say late 2012 or early 2013.
 34) S1: Yeah (.) so this question is not so good.

- 35) S2: Ahhh. Just is for...
 36) S1: Yeah soon. ↓

This section of dialogue starts out as a nice example of autonomous group work. Here S1 can clearly be seen assuming a teaching role and guiding her fellow student into an understanding of the difference between *just after* and *shortly after*. In her sentence, she used the phrase *just after* instead of *shortly after* and this was what made her statement false. She was trying to guide S2 into understanding this. In line 30, she repeatedly stresses the word, *just*, and in line 31, S2 replies also stressing the word, *just*, showing that he is following her and starting to figure out what she is hinting at. S1 then confirms S2's understanding in line 32.

Then I came in and, unknowingly, disrupted their flow. As my attention had been on the other group, I was not following the entire conversation and when I overheard S1 repeating the word, *just*, I made an instant decision that she was misusing the phrase, *just after*, and, in line 33, stepped in confidently with the comment that *shortly after* was more appropriate. This, of course, was S1's point all along and I completely misread the situation. The unfortunate result, which can be seen immediately in line 34, is that she lost confidence in what she was doing. In line 34, her intonation drops, showing a lack of confidence, and then she goes on to say her sentence "is not so good."

S2 still continues to unravel the difference between the two phrases and lets out an exclamation of understanding in line 35. S1 con-

firms his understanding in line 36 but her tone is low; the damage has been done.

Clearly, I need to be more mindful of what my students are saying before interjecting. This situation was slightly unnatural for me in this particular class because I normally work with them all together. Since the group is small and all of them are comfortable with one another, it is easy to get all of them participating together in whole class discussions. However, I would like to start incorporating new patterns like the one being looked at in this paper and this section of dialogue offers a clear lesson to me as to how I need to change my interactions with my students during small group work.

As teachers, we are in a position of authority and I think we naturally develop a sense of confidence as we interact with our students. By me coming confidently into their conversation as a teacher offering a correction, regardless of the fact that I was mistaken, S1 assumed that she had done something wrong with her sentence. The reality was that they were doing a fantastic job with the exercise and I would have been best just staying out of it and letting them work it out amongst themselves. Regardless of my unnecessary interference, I was happy to see how well they were working with one another.

Conclusion

At the outset of this project I expected to find my students using conversation strategies and, indeed, in the short dialogue that was examined, their conversations were full of these strategies. Also, examining their

speech for examples of self and peer-correction, I discovered multiple examples of self-correction though I did not find any examples of peer-correction. This seems natural to me as there is less social pressure in self-correction compared to peer-correction. It is my hope that as they become more autonomous with their learning and more comfortable teaching each other, they will be more inclined to correct each one another.

While I didn't observe peer-correction exactly, I did find multiple examples of the students working together to establish linguistic understanding. The example of S1 helping S2 to distinguish the difference between *just after* and *shortly after* provides a good example of the level of autonomous learning that they are capable of. This example was also a good reminder for me of the importance of being mindful of my students' speech.

As discussed earlier, I moved into the conversation to offer help but hadn't been accurately following the conversation and so offered advice that actually detracted from the learning that was occurring. As I gain experience as a teacher, I become more confident in my ability to quickly figure out what students are struggling with during conversation tasks. I must counterbalance this confidence with the practice of looking with fresh eyes at my students, observing fully before using my experience to offer help.

Seeing that my students already have proficiency in some important communication strategies, the question comes as to how I can use this knowledge to help them. As mentioned earlier in this paper, one possibility

could be to point out to them how they are already using these strategies. Perhaps this will make them more aware of what they are doing and help them more effectively use these strategies. Also, they might be able to start observing these strategies in their classmates' speech, giving them further power to learn from one another. From examining this dialogue I have become more aware of just how good my students are at working together and helping each other learn. And the more I can provide them with opportunities to learn from one another, the more successful I will feel as a teacher.

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Appendix - Transcript

- 1) S1: In Tunisia military played almost no role in the transition of power.
- 2) T: Read all three sentences and guess which is false.
- 3) S1: Ok. Number one, (0.5) in Tunisia military played, played, almost no role in the transition of power.
Number two, (0.5) Egyptians seems more confused about complicating election system which will last so long.
Number three, (0.5) A presidential election in Egypt will be set for just after the parliamentary election.
- 4) S2: Ahhhh
- 5) S1: Which is... You (0.5) Taron ↑ told not to check the newspaper. hhhhh
- 6) T: >>You can't check the newspaper. << (S2's name), you're not allowed-
- 7) S2: Ahhh Ahhh False, false is the second.
- 8) S1: Boo boo! Hhhhh
- 9) S2: Ah boo!? Are?
- 10) S3: Ok, once more.
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- 12) S3: Number one?
- 13) S1: Number one.
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- ing election system which will last so long. True
- 16) S3: It's true.
- 17) S1: Number three. A presidential election in Egypt will be set for just after the parliament <<parliamental ↑, parliamentary ↑ >>
- 18) T: Parliamentary
- 19) S1: Parliamentary election. Question three. So number two is true.
- 20) S3: Hmm mmm I think so.
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- 22) S2: Ahh I think they don't think it it's complicated.
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- 24) S2: I. I think. I think
- 25) S1: You think? But Egyptian...
- 26) S2: It is the usual thing they think I I think so I I I [want to ...]
- 27) T1 :[hhh]
- 28) S1: [hhh]
- 29) S2: and the third question is very ano important question but in newspaper ehhe after the parliament elections ... after I I think.
- 30) S1: Just after. Just after the parliamentary election a presidential election on Egypt will be set for... just after.
- 31) S2: Ahh ahh just is...
- 32) S1: Soon...
- 33) T: It's shortly after because actually they say late 2012 or early 2013.
- 34) S1: Yeah (.) so this question is not so good.
- 35) S2: Ahhh. Just is for..
- 36) S1: Yeah soon. ↓
- 37) S2: hmm mmm
- 39) S3: I think number one is wrong.
- 40) S2: (S1's name) is tricky.
- 41) S1: Number one is correct. Correct. correct. You can see the sentence in the article.
- 42) T: You can check the newspaper now.