



Strategic Competence and its Implication in Efl Syllabus

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Abstract

The current work studies directly and indirectly relating to the concept of strategic competence. research devoted to language proficiency and strategic competence being its component. The article comprises Bachman's model of strategic competence and its amended version. The investigation is devoted to cognitive basis related to syllabus determination and planning. There is also presented affective aspects of assessment in the ongoing process of CEFR perspective.

Keywords: strategic competence, communication strategy, ELT, Syllabus.

Introduction. Communication strategies (CSs) are important in helping second/foreign language learners to communicate successfully when they are faced with a production problem due to their lack of linguistic knowledge. This paper aims to support the importance of developing second language learners' strategic competence and making communication strategies part of an ELT syllabus. This paper first discusses the various definitions of strategic competence and communication strategies. Then it briefly presents various communication strategies used by second language learners to solve their communication problems. The major portion of this paper is devoted to strategy training and its advantages in language learning. Finally, the paper concludes with the importance of introducing tasks and activities on communication strategies in EFL syllabi, and suggests ways of improving teaching methodology to develop strategic competence.

Methodology. Canale/Swain describe strategic competence as providing a compensatory function when the linguistic competence of the language user is inadequate. According to Canale/Swain (ibid.), strategic competence consists of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, and it is called into action to "compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence". For Little, two problems arise from this definition:

- (i) there are many communicative situations in which strategic processes play an "offensive" rather than a "defensive" role;
- (ii) a definition of strategic competence that concentrates exclusively on language use may encourage the assumption that there is a psychological disjunction at the strategic level between language use and language learning.

Both native and non-native speakers use communication strategies, but non-native speakers use them more frequently, and they struggle to find the appropriate language item or structure when attempting to communicate a particular meaning. For example, in our native language, Arabic, we sometimes find it difficult to retrieve a certain vocabulary item, so we resort to CSs. Faucette supports this view "It seems evident that no individual's linguistic repertoire or control of language is perfect".

It seems very difficult to find a rigorous definition of communication strategies on which communication strategy researchers have had an agreement. There have been many definitions proposed for communication strategies of second language learners. Poulisse/



Bongaerts/Kellerman defined CSs as "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 shortcoming". On the other hand, Faerch/Kasper define CSs as "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal".

Experimental research on teaching communication strategies has been in favour of teaching them to develop the learners' strategic competence, which enables them to communicate more effectively and successfully. Many writers were in support of strategy training and they suggested that teaching CSs has got many advantages which lead to successful communication and. Mariani summarizes these advantages as follows:

1. Indirect learning strategies help to remain in conversation and this will lead to more successful performance and much positive impact on learning. He considers CS as part of language learning strategies.
2. By remaining in conversation, CSs help them on the productive side to get some useful feedback on their performance and on the receptive side, to execute control over their intake, for example, by making their interlocutor modify his/her utterances.
3. CSs train learners to be flexible to cope with the unexpected and the unpredictable. They help students to get used to non-exact communication which is perhaps the real nature of all communication.
4. CSs encourage risk-taking and individual initiative, and this is a step towards linguistic and cognitive autonomy.

Bachman and Palmer's (1996) perception of strategic competence complies with the perception of authors of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in which strategic competence functions as set of metacognitive principles and the use of communication strategies is seen as the application of the following principles: Preplanning, Execution, Monitoring, and Repair Action. Although, in the metacognitive principles presented by Council for Cultural Co-operation the goal setting component is missing we will consider matching the available potential to the nature of the task to be goal setting component. Bachman and Palmer conceive of strategic competence: as a set of metacognitive components, or strategies, which can be thought of as higher order executive processes that provide a cognitive management function in language use, as well as in other cognitive activities. Using language involves the language user's topical knowledge and affective schemata. What makes language use possible is the integration of all of these components as language users create and interpret discourse in situationally appropriate ways. They identify three general areas in which metacognitive components operate: goalsetting, assessment, and planning. The component which is not enumerated by Bachman and Palmer in the above definition and which we would also like to investigate is the execution component.

Bachman and Palmer claim that the assessment component operates in three ways. The first of them is referred to as assessment of the characteristics of the language use or test task, which would indicate that an advanced foreign language user can precisely identify the characteristics of the language use task or test task, in order to determine: the desirability and feasibility of successfully completing the task and, what elements of topical knowledge and language knowledge this is likely to require. The next one is assessment of the individual's own topical and language knowledge, which assumes that an advanced foreign language user will precisely determine the extent to which relevant topical knowledge and areas of language knowledge and available, and if available, which of them might be utilized for successfully completing the task. This aspect of assessment also considers an advanced foreign language user's available affective syllabus for coping with the demands of the task. The final one is referred to as assessment of the



correctness or appropriateness of the response to the test task, and involves an advanced foreign language user in evaluation of their response to the task with respect to the perceived criteria for correctness or appropriateness. The relevant criteria pertain to the grammatical, textual, functional, and sociolinguistic characteristics of the response, as well as its topical content. In the event the response appears to be incorrect or inappropriate. This aspect of assessment enables an advanced foreign language user to diagnose the possible causes of the problem, which might lead to the change of the communicative goal, the plan for implementing that goal, or both, depending on the situation. Affective schemata are involved in determining the extent to which failure was due to inadequate effort, to the difficulty of the task, or to random sources of interference.

Conclusion. By Bachman and Palmer strategic competence is considered to be a set of metacognitive strategies while communication strategies can be perceived as a set of strategies which rest on the skill and cleverness of the language user. The important point about strategies is that they are to be used both when the enemy is to be evaded or crushed. In view of their importance in enabling communication to take place and the links between communication and learning, the study of communication strategies in reference to strategic competence ought to provide important theoretical and practical insights in the future.

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