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Communication Strategies in East-West Interactions

ELAINE TARONE AND GEORGE YULE

THE use of English as an international language for communication is probably more common today than ever before.¹ It must now be a regular occurrence that East-West interaction, as between Japanese and Mexican businessmen for example, takes place in neither Japanese nor Spanish, but in English. This international use of English should make us even more cognizant of the factors involved in the way non-native speakers (NNS) of English develop communicative skills in a language which, for many, has been learned at school or college. In this chapter we would like to present the preliminary results of an investigation of one set of such factors, namely the use of communication strategies by these learners of English as a second language (ESL).

It has been suggested that, to understand the communicative use of a language, we must focus our investigations on aspects of a learner's *communicative competence*. Canale and Swain (1980) have proposed a helpful analysis of the components of communicative competence:

- (1) grammatical competence – the knowledge of what is grammatically correct in a language;
- (2) sociolinguistic competence – the knowledge of what is socially acceptable in a language;
- (3) strategic competence – the knowledge of how to use communication strategies to communicate intended meaning.

Although they are not to be considered discrete, these three components (it is argued) can be mastered with differing degrees of proficiency at any one point in time. That is, a learner in a traditional foreign language classroom may be quite proficient in terms of grammatical competence, being able to achieve high scores on standard language tests (e.g. TOEFL), while at the same time remaining relatively ignorant of speech-act conventions in the target language, or relatively unable to use the language with ease or appropriateness in social interaction.

Mastery of sociolinguistic skills in a language entails mastery of pragmatics and speech-act conventions, norms of stylistic appropriateness, and the uses of language to establish and maintain social relations. Mastery of strategic skills in

a language entails the ability to transmit information to a hearer and correct interpret information received, and includes the mastery of communicative strategies, used to deal with problems which may arise in the transmission of this information.

Quite a bit of research has been done on the sociolinguistic competence of ESL learners, covering their mastery of politeness norms (Walters, 1979), speech-acts (Rintell, 1979), and of register (Schmidt, 1981; Gillette, 1981). Much of the work reported in this volume relates to the sociolinguistic and sociocultural factors involved in producing and understanding English texts both spoken and written.

Research on the strategic competence of ESL learners is quite recent. Two broad areas may be investigated:

- (1) the overall skill of a speaker in successfully transmitting information to a hearer;
- (2) the use of communication strategies by a speaker when problems encountered in the process of attempting to transmit information.

To our knowledge, very little research has been done on the learner's overall skills in strategic competence. Paribakht (1982) assessed the success of learners in communicating information by means of a 'simple count of each subject frequency of successful communication of . . . target items' – subcategorized these into identification of the concept and identification of the exact word. However, it is not clear what criteria were involved in determining 'success' and in any case, this was not the primary focus of her study. More systematic research of this sort *has* been done with native speakers of English, assessing their 'transactional speech' – speech where the speaker is primarily concerned with transferring information to a hearer. This research (Yule, 1982; Brown and Yule, 1983) developed a task-based methodology for the objective assessment of the communicative effectiveness of native-speaker adolescents in using the spoken language. In this methodology a series of transactional language tasks (narrative, descriptive and instructional) was devised, in which a speaker had to transfer information to a listener who did not previously possess this information and who required it to complete some specific task. The aim was to situate the speaker in a well-defined position where s/he was in possession of the relevant knowledge and where s/he knew that the hearer needed that information in order to complete a task. The problem the speaker was to determine which aspects of the information s/he possessed were relevant to the task at hand and to control the flow of information to the listener so that the listener was provided with the relevant information and credited with knowledge which s/he could not reasonably be expected to have. This methodology elicited spontaneous speech from students but at the same time allowed the researcher to determine what the essential content of the speech should be. An objective scoring procedure was developed and applied to speaker performances, so that speakers could be compared with another with regard to degree of success in communicating the essential information required by the task.

It seems clear that this same research technique could easily be applied in

area of second-language acquisition and use, to systematically assess the communicative effectiveness of a second-language learner in the target language, as well as to elicit the use of communication strategies.

The second area of strategic competence – the use of communication strategies to solve problems encountered in the transmission of information – has been investigated by researchers. In fact, this research is summarized and discussed in a recent book, *Strategies in interlanguage communication*, edited by Faerch and Kasper (1983). Faerch and Kasper define communication strategies as 'potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal'. Tarone (1981) sets out the following criteria as characteristic of a communication strategy:

- (1) a speaker desires to communicate a meaning X to a listener;
- (2) the speaker believes the linguistic or sociolinguistic structure desired to communicate meaning X is unavailable, or is not shared with the listener;
- (3) the speaker chooses to:
 - (a) avoid – not attempt to communicate meaning X; or
 - (b) attempt alternative means to communicate meaning X. The speaker stops trying alternatives when it seems clear to the speaker that there is shared meaning.

Some examples of communication strategies used by second-language learners are provided below. This list of strategies is not intended to be a final categorization of all existent communication strategies; it is simply provided to help clarify the notion of communication strategy.

Avoidance

Topic avoidance – the learner simply tries not to talk about concepts for which the target language item or structure is not known.
Message abandonment – the learner begins to talk about a concept but is unable to continue and stops in mid-utterance.

Paraphrase

Approximation – the learner uses a single target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the speaker (e.g. *pipe for waterpipe*).
Word coinage – the learner makes up a new word in order to communicate a desired concept (e.g. *airball for balloon*).
Circumlocution – the learner describes the properties of the object or action instead of using the appropriate target language item or structure (e.g. 'it's oval and shiny', or 'She is, uh, smoking something. . . . That's, uh, Persian, and we use in Turkey, a lot of.')

Borrowing

Literal translation – the learner translates word for word from the native language (e.g. 'He invites him to drink', for 'They toast one another').
Language switch – the learner uses the native language term without bothering to translate (e.g. *balon for balloon, tirtil for caterpillar*).

Appeal for assistance

The learner asks for the correct term (e.g. 'What is this? What called?').

Mime

The learner uses non-verbal tactics in place of a lexical item or action (e.g. clapping one's hands to illustrate applause), or to accompany another communication strategy (e.g. 'It's about this long').

A more detailed typology of communication strategies, providing, for example, a breakdown of types of circumlocution, is available in Paribakht (1982).

Research on communication strategies used by second-language learners has focused primarily on interactions between learners and native speakers of the target language (e.g. Tarone, 1977; Paribakht, 1982).

We know of *no* research in this area of interlanguage studies – either on overall success in communicating information, or on communication strategy use – which examines the interaction between second-language learners who do not share the same native language and who are communicating with each other in the target language – as, for example, in the use of English as a lingua franca or as an international language. Such research is badly needed, we feel, for several reasons.

- (1) English is increasingly being used as a lingua franca – in business and politics – by non-native speakers of English. What happens to the transmission of information in such interactions?
- (2) This is the most common sort of interaction in the typical ESL classroom where learners have different native languages (NLs) – particularly a class which uses the newer 'communicative approaches' to second-language teaching, where students are given lots of practice using English to talk to each other – but not to talk to native speakers. Do the communication strategies used in such interactions really transfer over to interactions when the non-native speaker (NNS) must use English with a native speaker (NS)? Are they at all similar to communication strategies NS's use with each other?
- (3) From the point of view of linguistic theory, it has been argued that pidgin languages developed in the context of the use of a lingua franca by interactants with different NL backgrounds, for the primary purpose of transmitting information (and not for establishment of group membership, social solidarity, etc.). We should know more about how

information is transmitted in such interactions in order to better understand the linguistic structure of the resultant pidgin language.

Because of the absolute lack of research in this area, we decided to undertake a study which might begin to provide some insight into questions such as the following:

- (1) What sorts of communication strategies are used by NNS of English from different NL backgrounds in order to describe an object, provide instructions for a series of actions, or narrate a sequence of events?
- (2) Do these communication strategies vary depending on the NL and cultural background of the interlocutor?
- (3) In what ways does this communication in English by NNS differ from that typically produced by NS of English performing the same tasks?

We were particularly interested in examining interactions between speakers of languages spoken on the Pacific Rim – in particular, between speakers of Spanish and speakers of an Asian language – where English was the language of interaction.

We were, unfortunately, unable to find as many speakers of any one Asian language as of Spanish; consequently, in our study we had three groups of Asian-language speakers: Japanese, Korean and Chinese. Our subjects were 12 Spanish speakers, who interacted with one of the following: 6 Japanese speakers, 5 Korean speakers, and 4 Chinese speakers. In addition, we studied 9 NS of English who performed the same tasks with each other as the NNS of English.

Procedure

Two subjects participated in each session. With the NNS population, one subject was South American and the other was Asian. One subject was given the speaker role and the other was asked to be the listener who would simply pay attention, without interrupting, to what the speaker said. Both subjects were given tasks. The speaker's task was to look at a set of visual stimuli presented on a video screen and to describe, give instructions for, or narrate what was shown. On the screen there appeared, one after the other, four objects to describe, one series of operations to be carried out and one set of events. Thus, for example, the speaker saw a hairbrush on the screen for about 20 seconds and when the screen went blank, was asked to describe what had been shown. After that first description had been completed, the second object to be described was shown on the screen, and so on. The speaker knew s/he was being tape-recorded, and sat face to face with the listener across a table with a low screen. The speaker was allowed as much time as s/he wanted to produce the description. The listener could not see the video screen. To accompany each visual stimulus shown on the screen to the speaker, the listener had a set of still photographs, marked A, B and C. In the description task, for example, the listener had a still photograph of the hairbrush which

appeared on the screen, labelled B, plus two other still photographs, (A) a (C), of other types of brushes. The listener's task was to listen to the speaker's description and to identify which of the three photographs best fit the description. The only feedback which the listener could provide the speaker was non-verbal, as the speaker could see the listener's face and upper body; the speaker could not see the still photographs. After the speaker finished all the tasks, the listener and speaker changed places – the listener becoming the speaker on a new round of tasks, and the speaker becoming the listener.² With the NS population, the same procedure was followed. Speakers were allowed to use gesture in communicating; however, since speakers were not videotaped, no systematic record of their use of mime was kept.

The aim of this task-based procedure is to provide a speaker with some pre-selected information to convey, a listener who requires that information and an awareness that an information gap exists. A fuller description of the type of elicitation procedure is presented in Brown and Yule (1983).

The speaker's utterances were tape-recorded and transcribed. An analysis of the transcripts, involving categorization into communication strategy types, was conducted on both the NNS-NNS interactions, and the NS-NNS interactions.

Results

A detailed analysis of the results of this research project is still in progress. However, the more salient characteristics of the communication strategies used in this sort of NNS-NNS interaction are already evident, and will be reported here, together with examples taken from the data. Further analysis will refine and further substantiate the observations we report here.

1. Occurrence of already-documented communication strategies

Several of the categories of communication strategy previously discussed in the literature may be observed in the East-West interactions in this study. For example, the two categories of circumlocution and approximation occurred with particular frequency in these interactions.

Circumlocution, in which the speaker describes the properties of the target object or action (i.e. the colour, size, shape, function, etc.), occurred in NNS accounts such as these:

(J5) The colour is, uh, dark, and uh, . . . the size is just, uh, uh, as a hand, . . . it is made of uh, la, leather.

(K5) OK this is oval shape one side has a hair and the backside has string in middle part so you can put your fing – your hands.

(S1) It is made by rubber – but it is cutted on front – that you can have your fingers out – if you wear that

Approximation, in which the speaker uses a term which shares a number of semantic features with the target lexical item or structure, occurred in this sort of NNS account:

- (K2) It's a kind of the mitten.
 (K3) And right side he is uh draw a shape. OK? A circle round, triangle here.
 (S8) Maybe is something like a rope.
 (J6) And the shape is like a octopus (laugh) but it has just three legs. Not eight legs. Head, and, three legs. Like octopus. (laugh)

Note that K2 and K3 above approximate by using a superordinate term ('mitten', 'shape') and then indicate that the target item is related to that term by hyponymy. S8 uses a type of approximation which might be termed *analogy* (see Paribakht, 1982), offering the term 'rope' as an analogy to the target 'electrical cord'. And J6 uses the analogy type of approximation as well, likening a Christmas tree stand to an octopus, and then, by means of circumlocution, indicating which properties of the two objects in the analogy differ.

Other types of communication strategy which occurred in these NNS–NNS interactions include avoidance, message abandonment, mime, and literal translation.

Outright topic avoidance was attempted by a few subjects who, when they saw the object on the video, said they had no name for the object, and made no further attempt to talk about it:

- (C2) I don't know what this name.
 (C2) I don't know what's this. (laugh)

Message abandonment, in which the speaker starts out using communication strategies but then gives up and stops talking, also occurred in these interactions:

- (S3) crush or to – oh I don't know the { word? } { verb } – I think that's all.
 (C4) I saw the TV the first you – eh – eh – lack(?) put together and you – do the next – step – I can't (unintelligible) it I'm sorry.

However, it should be noted that both topic avoidance and message abandonment occurred **relatively infrequently in our data; the overwhelming majority of NNS attempted some means of communicating information via communication strategies, even when this attempt seemed to involve great effort.**

The communication strategy of mime seemed to be used fairly frequently in these interactions by most NNS. As pointed out earlier, because we did not videotape the NNS–NNS interactions, we have no systematic record of speakers' use of this communication strategy. However, the following two examples will serve to document that this strategy did occur. There were, in fact, two types of mime; in one case, mime took the place of a desired structure or item, as in:

- (S6) the oval is the big one and the other part is what, take to (demonstrates holding the handle of a brush)

More frequently, mime accompanied a speaker's use of other communication strategies, as below where the speaker uses circumlocution and mime simultaneously:

- (J5) And the shape is, the big, down part is just like, this and uh, this size, and the upper side is just like this.

So far, it seems that the only NNS group which did not use mime to communicate information in these interactions is the Chinese-speaking group; however, as this group was smaller than the others we have examined, we cannot determine whether the omission of mime by this group was significant in any sense.

It is somewhat surprising at first to notice that the strategy of literal translation was used by some NNS in this study – surprising because the listener in each dyad could not be known to speak the native language of the speaker. The success of literal translation as a communication strategy depends to a great extent on the speaker's assumption that either (a) the hearer knows the speaker's native language, or (b) the speaker's native language and the target language are similar enough in structure that a literal translation from the NL might in fact be a cognate in the TL. The fact that all the instances of literal translation we have been able to document thus far were produced by Spanish speakers would seem to favour the second possibility – that the Spanish speaker uses literal translation in hopes of hitting a cognate in English. The use of this strategy would suggest that the speaker believes that English and Spanish are so closely related that many cognates exist. The fact that one never knows whether a communication strategy will be successful until it is tried, and the fact that many words in English and Spanish *are* cognates, make the literal translation strategy a more fruitful one than one might at first suppose. Examples of the use of this strategy include:

- (S5) In each, in each *extreme* (Sp. *extremo* = Eng. *end*), in each uh . . . is an English word, *extreme*? (laugh) has something for connecting, on the equipment.
 (S5) Take it and . . . put, uh, from the side (4-second pause) *inferious*. *Inferi*, mm, from the inferior side (Sp. *inferior* = Eng. *bottom*)
 (S4) and in this *moment* go into the class a – a girl (Sp. *en este momento* = Eng. *at this moment*)
 (S6) It's like a knife, in one of the *extremes*, together, with a little brush
 (S2) what happened with my *explication* and my drawing? (Sp. *explicación* = Eng. *explanation*)

Two communication strategies which did *not* occur in the NNS–NNS interactions were language switch and appeal to authority. Language switch, which is related to the strategy of literal translation described above, relies solely on the assumption that the hearer knows the speaker's native language. It is used when the NL term or structure appears in the TL discourse with no change in pronunciation and word form. The speakers in our study did not attempt to use this strategy at all with one another. Only one use of the NL by a speaker was noted, and this was an utterance produced at low volume in which the speaker was apparently talking to himself, possibly trying to use association with the NL term to retrieve the TL term from his memory:

- (S8) how do you say in English that word? We say in Spanish *bujia*. Y *espero* . . .

The other communication strategy which did not occur in these interactions was appeal to authority. This is not surprising, as, in NNS–NNS interaction, the listener cannot be assumed to have either the information or the language to respond to such an appeal. This is one major difference between previous:

repetition of a part of a story could serve either function:

- (S8) and the teacher all the time is writing on the blackboard. She is writing on the blackboard. she is. eh, she is, she is, looking, looking, she is looking at the blackboard because she is writing.

In this case, there is less disfluency, and (by the end) the addition of information to the original message. The same speaker, S8, actually repeated his entire narrative (which was already quite lengthy) *twice* from beginning to end. Since his listener had not (non-verbally) indicated any confusion about the point of the original narrative, the purpose of this repetition seemed to be less to make the message clear to the listener than to allow the speaker to formulate the narrative in a more fluent manner. As used for this purpose, the repetition of the narrative would be a production strategy rather than a communication strategy.

On the other hand, some repetitions do seem to be produced when the listener non-verbally indicates that the message as first formulated has not been clear. The speaker, in response, repeats the message as originally stated. In the first example below, K3 repeats the term 'Scotch tape' six times:

- (K3) This is a, *Scotch tape*. *Tape*. Something, uh (unintell.) tear, uh, uh, tear, eh, at the time, eh, we need uh *Scotch tape*. Eh, goes together, eh, together, To, together. OK? And uh some, sometimes, we, uh, purchase, purchase. Box, . . . oh, . . . this is uh *Scotch tape*, *Scotch tape*? And uh, . . . oh, this is uh, . . . some *Scotch tape*, *Scotch tape*, put in a box. OK? Little box.

Throughout this monologue, the listener's face looked puzzled, and the speaker continued trying repetition in response. In the next example, J4 identified a Christmas tree stand as a 'pole stander', and repeated this phrase or some variation of it throughout her discourse. Her listener also maintained a puzzled facial expression, and responded negatively twice to J4's comprehension checks:

- (J4) This I guess this is for a, *pole stander*. When you put the *pole* at, uh, *pole* at *stand* . . . youuu . . . mm, . . . they have a round material and you put, through and screw the . . . uh, . . . (laugh) screw. Screw. From three sides. And this one has three, legs. And the shape is round. . . (laugh) Do you need more? Well, you can put the *poles* in the round thing. And, from, three sides, . . . OK, first of all, you put the *poles*, in it! There is no pole, in, in, the picture, and, when you put a *pole* in . . . you, screw, from three sides? and let the *pole stand* . . . this is a, basic of a, *stand*, as *pole* . . . so you don't need to dig, the ground to *stand* the *pole*. (laugh) Not enough (laugh)

A less extended type of repetition, which seems to share similarities with the approximative strategy, occurs when the speaker repeats the term, not exactly, but in paraphrase. Given the elicitation situation in which our data were produced, one might expect that each NNS would attempt to make sure that the NNS listener had every opportunity to understand the conveyed message. This general motive may be behind the frequent use of the 'paraphrase', or 'double-barrelled' type of repetition which occurs in our data. Let us consider some examples:

- (S1) she looks the her clock, her watch
(S3) put her bag, her suitcase

stories which examined NNS-NS interactions, and our study. A NS listener can reasonably be appealed to for assistance; a NNS listener who speaks a different NL from the speaker cannot.

2. Newly-observed aspects of communication strategy use

Certain aspects of communication strategy use are clearly in evidence in these NNS-NNS interactions which have not been mentioned in previous studies on communication strategies – possibly because these previous studies have focused on another sort of interaction altogether. We have observed three new types of communication strategy in use in these interactions, all of which seem to us to serve the same general function of providing the listener with several opportunities to identify the object or entity involved: repetition, explicitation, and over-explicitness. We have also observed that speakers in these NNS-NNS interactions seem to be particularly careful to avoid the use of culturally bound information in their communication strategies – that is, information which their listener would be unlikely to know.

Little attention has been focused, in the study of communication strategies, on the frequent repetitions which characterize NNS English spoken production. One type of repetition occurs when the NNS appears to stall, trying to find a word or phrase to convey the message. An extended example of this type of repetition is illustrated below:

- (C1) and he, just want to . . . ah, want to . . . to, . . . he wan, he go to the, . . . she go to the blackboard and uh, want to . . . ah, . . . wash, wash the . . . the picture off, . . .

This type of repetition occurs in varying amounts, throughout many of the NNS data. This phenomenon, however, may not be of primary interest in the study of how NNS set about communicating their intended messages. It is certainly of interest as a clue to points in the discourse where the speaker is having some difficulty finding an appropriate TL expression to convey the intended meaning, but it may be an extremely general *production* strategy in spoken discourse which manifests itself in all spontaneous spoken production, including NS production. The difference between NNS and NS accounts appears to be in the amount of repetition of this type. Within the set of NNS accounts there is also variation in the amount of repeated words and phrases. This type of repetition, with its accompanying pausing and incomplete structures, certainly contributes to the general impression of lack of fluency in NNS speech. Since we do not wish to include lack of fluency (like wrong tense forms, inappropriate prepositions, etc.) as part of any communication strategy, we shall simply note this type of repetition and attempt to keep it distinct from another type which does seem part of an attempt to convey the intended message effectively. It is not always easy to tell whether the use of repetition is serving the function of a production strategy (that is, as a means of 'buying time' to allow the speaker to formulate a plan for the next segment of discourse), or that of a communication strategy, in providing the listener with another chance to hear and process the information. In the example below, the

- (S4) two piece of sheet, two paper
- (S8) she pick up the, all the, he raise all the papers
- (S10) the lecturer, the teacher
- (C4) his schoolmate, eh classmate
- (K5) her purse, her bag
- (J4) in the student's purse, bag
- (S1) the classroom is, eh, empty - no one else is in there

Examples such as these may be indicative of a communication strategy used by the NNS when using English to convey a message to another NNS. In each case, the speaker is giving an alternative identifying term, not necessarily a synonym, to reinforce the first term used. The pattern does not necessarily illustrate a 'general term - specific term' sequence, but seems more a result of providing two chances for the listener to identify, roughly, the entity or action involved.

Possibly deriving from the same NNS-listener effect is a strategy which could be tentatively characterized as 'explication'. It is not a repetition of an expression or of an alternative identifying expression, but rather a spelling-out of what is meant by the expression used. An example from one of the narratives may clarify this strategy:

- (C2) second picture is, uh, st. irtriangle - triangle has three sides.
- (C2) draw, a picture, about, uh, the word, uh, circle - circle is, round.

It seems as if this speaker has attempted to make certain that the relevant graphic features of 'triangle' and 'circle' are known to the listener. In a similar way, in the following extract the speaker has decided to explicate what aspect of the identified object should be known:

- (S8) in the arm of the chair - the arm of the chair is when the, when you use for to write
- This type of strategy is also noticeable in the description tasks when a speaker first uses a term and then decides to 'explicate' what that English term means:
- (S1) it is like a mitten . . . the glove is a with fing- with fingers and the mitten is without fingers so it is - a mitten

The appearance of such 'explications' may be a reflection of the communication situation in which the listener is not a NS and so the NNS speaker has to gauge how much the listener knows of the language being used as the communicative medium. It is, of course, a strategy which has drawbacks in interpersonal terms, since the listener may not take kindly to having English words (which he may know) explained to him/her by another NNS. Despite this risk, however, the strategy will clearly be a useful device if the speaker wishes to use some technical term which the listener cannot be expected to know. From a pedagogical point of view, it is a strategy which should be encouraged while providing the NNS with the means to use the strategy, suitable hedged, to inform the listener without the implication of ignorance on the listener's part.

The communication strategy of over-explicitness which appeared in the NNS-NNS interactions will be illustrated here by reference to performance on the narration task; however, this strategy also occurred in the other task types.

The term 'over-explicitness' is used to refer to the greater use of detail in the NNS accounts than in the NS accounts.

There is a typical pattern to the NS organization of narrative accounts which divides the event sequence into sets of actions involving each individual character. For example, the teacher is introduced, performs a set of actions, then the first student is introduced, performs a set of actions, and so on. Thus, the basic narrative structure found in NS accounts of one of the stories takes the following form:

- A teacher comes into the classroom, lays a magazine on the desk, starts writing on the blackboard.
- A student comes in, picks up the magazine, pages through the magazine, lays it down, and leaves the room.
- Another student comes in, picks up the magazine, pages through, puts it in the first student's bag.
- The first student comes back, puts the bag on the floor.
- The teacher turns round, starts looking for the magazine.

There are, of course, additional details found in each NS account, but there appears to be a general 'filtering out' of the mass of detail presented visually in order to produce the main events listed above. While a similar 'filtering' process is in evidence in the NNS accounts, there are several ways in which the conveyed narratives exhibit a much more explicit recounting of the events (and their interpretation) than is found in the typical NS version. If the NS versions can be viewed as evidence of the normal amount of explicitness required in producing an oral narrative in English, under the task conditions, then we can point to some critical aspects of over-explicitness in the NNS accounts. It may be, of course, that this 'over-explicitness' is evidence of a general communication strategy which involves an attempt to make sure that everything observed is presented to the listener. This strategy may be occasioned, in part, by uncertainty on the speaker's behalf, regarding what are and what are not crucial elements in a narrative account.

It is, however, more probable that this strategy is prompted by the fact that the listener is not a native speaker of English and may require much more help in understanding what happened. That is, each NNS may decide that another NNS listener will not be able to construct an interpretation from the message unless every story-element is spelled out. At the present stage of our research, this is an untested hypothesis, but it may provide a tentative explanation for some of the linguistic phenomena we shall describe.

Some of the differences in explicitness are relatively straightforward. The most 'detailed' NS account of the first student's arrival is as follows:

- (E1) a student walks in and sits down in the front row
- (K4) another woman, her hair is blonde, come into the classroom and sit in the front row at the center
- (S1) a girl, a blonde girl, arrived to the classroom, and sit in front of th, in one of the chairs of the classroom but just in front of the desk, of the teacher's desk

There are two aspects of these NNS extracts worth noting. First, there is the

obvious inclusion of additional descriptive detail ('blonde hair') and the more precise location of the student's seat. Second, there is a certain amount of information ('into the classroom') included which has to be treated as redundant, in the sense that the classroom setting is established at the beginning of every narrative.

Other examples of additional locational detail can be illustrated, as in the following (characteristically brief) NS extract compared with the next two NNS extracts:

- (E7) a third woman comes in
 (K2) the other, the other woman student came in the classroom and sit next to a woman's, the woman's chair
 (S10) in this moment came another, another girl, another woman, and she sit down beside the desk where the other girl left the magazine

Other examples of redundancy are also to be found in the frequent repetition in NNS accounts that the teacher 'is writing on the blackboard' and 'finish to write on the blackboard', when it has already been established at the beginning of the account that the teacher is indeed using the blackboard.

The general feature of repetition in NNS accounts has been commented on already. One manifestation of this general strategy may be discerned in the difference between NS and NNS organization of introductory and subsequent reference to characters in the story. In NS accounts, a typical structure takes the following form:

- (E5) one student comes in
 Ø sees the article on the desk
 Ø picks it up
 Ø takes her seat
 Ø proceeds to page through it
 and
 Ø

In this type of structure, a number of actions are predicated of the one character, explicitly identified once, and a conjunction is only used to connect the final predication to the preceding set. This is not a typical structure found in NNS accounts. It is much more common to find each predication joined to the next by a conjunction ('and' or 'and then') and for a pronoun (and occasionally a repetition of the full nominal expression) to be used, rather than ellipsis. The typical discourse structure of NNS accounts takes the following form:

- (J6) a student came into the classroom
 and she couldn't settle down
 because she watch her watch
 or she opens magazine
 but she never read it
 and she closes magazine
 and she went somewhere
 (S8) the student take one magazine
 and she began to see, to turn the page
 and she put one magazine
 and she in his chair
 go out of the classroom

While this latter type of structure may prove advantageous in terms of explicitly marking out each 'chunk' of information as separate from the preceding 'chunk', it certainly loses some of the naturalness of English oral narrative. The strategy used by the NNS to structure the set of events in their accounts is possibly a further example of the general strategic device of 'over-explicitness', in which the frequent use of conjunctions and pronouns builds in more redundancy in the message than is typically found in the NS accounts.

This general conclusion receives some support from the pattern of distribution of full nominal versus pronominal realizations of reference to the 'magazine' which is at the centre of one of the stories. It might have been expected, on the basis of frequent pronominal reference to the characters, already illustrated, that the NNS would use pronominals ('it', 'that') when talking about the magazine, after the initial introduction. In the NS accounts the magazine is referred to more frequently via pronominals than via full nominal expressions. However, there is an overwhelming preference for repeating the full nominal in all NNS accounts relating to the magazine. As illustrating, the following three extracts are from a NS, a native Japanese speaker and a native Spanish speaker respectively:

- (E7) picks up the magazine, looks at it for a while and then puts it back in the bag
 (J6) she began to open the magazine again and soon she close magazine
 (S10) to her was kind of interesting the magazine and she took the magazine and become to see the magazine

The different ratios of full form to reduced form realizations of reference to the 'magazine' in Narrative One in our data are summarized in the following figures:

	NS	NNS	NNS
		(Asian)	(South American)
Full form	18	49	54
Reduced form	33	12	6

Finally, we may observe additional evidence of the sensitivity of these NNS to the sort of interaction they are involved in by noting their use of culturally bound information in their communication strategies. The role of such information in communication strategy use seems to be much more restricted in these NNS-NNS interactions than in, say, Paribakht's study (where Persian-speaking subjects seem to have made free use of transliterated L1 idioms and proverbs in their interactions). The speakers in our study did not seem to make much use of references to their native cultures in their use of communication strategies: most of the information they included did not seem to require that the listener be familiar with the speaker's culture. A possible exception to this generalization might be the attempt by two Korean speakers to compare a Christmas tree stand to a 'burner' (an object possibly more familiar in Korean culture than in others):

- (K1) there are some steel object like banner(?) -
 (K2) in that video, video picture, uh, someone combined a [bana]

strategies did *not* occur: language switch and appeal to authority; their absence seems to us to be due to the type of interaction involved.

Three communication strategies not previously noted in the literature were observed in this study: repetition, explication and over-explicitness. We also observed that NNS seemed to be careful not to use culturally based information which their NNS listeners could not be expected to know, but *were* willing to use culturally based information which their listeners were likely to be familiar with.

Future research in this area could, it seems to us, profitably address itself to the following questions, among others:

What are the overall skills of NNS in strategic competence? Will the methodology for objectively measuring NS skills in this area be useful in studying NNS skills?

To what extent do speakers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds use communication strategies differentially?

How successful are these communication strategies in transmitting intended information to listeners from other NL backgrounds?

What are the linguistic consequences of using a particular communicative strategy?

Notes

1. We are grateful to the Center for Research in Human Learning at the University of Minnesota for use of its human subject protocol procedure. Our thanks also go to the international students who volunteered their time to help us in this study: to their ES teachers who made it possible for them to do so, especially Sheryl Holt; and to Pam Coug, Susan Gillette and Lois Malcolm, who assisted in the production of the video tapes used in this study.

2. As yet, we have not examined our data to determine whether there may be any 'listener effects' noticeable in the performance of those subjects who took the listener-role prior to speaking. Previous research has shown that there can be some role-related effect in terms of specificity of information transferred, but no effect in terms of communication strategies; it has yet been discerned (cf. Anderson *et al.*, 1982).

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Only Korean speakers referred to this object as a 'burner', and the strategy (confounded as it was by pronunciation problems) did not seem to have been particularly effective as far as the listener was concerned.

The more common tendency of these speakers, as noted above, seems to have been to avoid such 'culturally loaded' references - as when S8 attempts and then abandons an analogy of set screws to sardine can keys, apparently because he decided halfway through that his listener could not be expected to know what a sardine can key was:

(S8) we have three key, three, three objects that, I like a key, when you open a sardines? Mm, no, no, no, no, no. Forget that (laugh) we are going to confuse that.

Thus, the speakers in their attempts to use communication strategies did seem to take the identity of the listener into consideration and to operate with definite hypotheses about the sorts of culturally based information the listener could be expected to have at his/her disposal.

One type of culturally based information which many of the speakers *did* use, was information which people who live in Minnesota can be expected to have - as, for example, when speakers S1, S5, S8, J4, J5, J6, K4 and K5 all identified a paint scraper as a snow scraper. This strategy seemed in fact to be quite effective.

Another sort of culturally based information which some speakers used was information which members of an international sub-culture - specifically, horse-riding culture - might be expected to have. Thus, for example, in describing a crop, speakers who obviously had correctly recognized its function, said:

(J2) you can use this stick for the horse

(S7) it's a (unintelligible) using for jockeying . . . eh, when they ride a horse? For to hit the horse?

The inclusion of this sort of information in communicating with NNS was not always successful from the point of view of the listener, who might or might not be familiar with horse riding. However, speakers seemed willing to try to include *this* sort of culturally based information in their communication strategies, perhaps on the twin assumptions that one never knows whether a communication strategy will be successful until it is tried, and that their listeners *might* have been familiar with horse-riding culture, which is more or less international.

All these uses and non-uses of culturally based information by the speakers in these NNS-NNS interactions seem to show that the speakers were making fairly sophisticated and sensitive decisions about the sorts of information which their listeners might reasonably be expected to have at their disposal in decoding communication strategies, and were using this information to produce strategies which were most transparent to their listeners.

To summarize our research to date, then, we have found that a number of the communication strategies already noted in the literature also occurred in these NNS-NNS interactions using English: circumlocution, approximation, avoidance, message abandonment, mime and literal translation. Two

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