An investigation of communication strategies of adult ESL learners

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AN INVESTIGATION OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF
ADULT ESL LEARNERS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Kermey Wang
December 1998
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December 1998

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Date
November 14, 1998
ABSTRACT

When second language learners engage in conversation with native speakers, communication problems often arise. This is even more common in real-life situations where "linguistically naive" native speakers interact with nonnative speakers. Although much research has been undertaken in this field, most of the previous studies have focused on the classroom environment, with data elicitation well-controlled. Little work has been done to investigate the use of communication strategies in real-life communication situations. This research, however, attempts to investigate which communication strategies second language learners may apply when they encounter communication problems with native speakers in real-life situations. In addition, it also investigates which are preferred or less preferred, and the influence the relationship between first language and second language might have on the choice of communication strategy. Six Spanish-speaking adult students at Corona-Norco Adult School are the subjects of this study. All six audio-taped their actual conversations. Three of the interactions took place at Corona Parks and Recreation Department. The other three are spontaneous conversations, two with NS in a work environment and one with a friend. A total of 39 instances
of communication strategies applications have been identified and analyzed. All communication strategies used are second-language-based strategies (the learner relies on the existing knowledge of second language to compensate for a communication breakdown), including achievement strategies (the learner makes an effort to reach the original communication purpose by himself/herself when the target language knowledge is insufficient), cooperative strategies (the learner attempts to solve the communication problems on a cooperative basis), and reduction strategies (the learner encounters a communication problem and decides to change or give up the original communication purpose). The most frequently used are achievement and cooperative strategies. Three types of achievement and cooperative strategies: restructuring, indirect appeal, and negotiation, are preferred by the subjects. The least used strategy is reduction strategy. No first-language-based strategy has been found. The similarity of first language and second language does not seem to be a factor affecting the subjects' choice of communication strategies in real-life situations.
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CHAPTER ONE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

1.1 OVERVIEW OF INTERLANGUAGE STUDY

From the 1950's to the 1960's, it was popularly believed that second language (L2) learners were strongly influenced by their first language (L1) during their second language acquisition. Such an effect was usually regarded as a negative one. The difficulties that the L2 learners faced were assumed to be caused by the interference of their L1 knowledge, which was called language transfer. Such an explanation of second language acquisition was greatly influenced by the then dominant behaviorist theory of general learning represented by Skinner (1957). Within this behaviorist learning theory, it was believed that language learning was a process of habit formation. It was supposed that if L2 learners could overcome the effects of L1 and replace the features of L1 interfering with the L2 and acquire a set of new language habits, their speech in the target language would become more like native-speakers' speech. Therefore, a new area of research developed called Contrastive Analysis. The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis focused on the identification of the differences between L1 and L2. Those differences were thought to be responsible
for the errors appearing in the L2. Contrastive analysts claimed that we could predict L2 learners' errors through a comparison of the differences between the target language and the learner's mother tongue (Lado, 1957).

However, the inability of Contrastive Analysis to predict and explain errors resulted in many attacks on its value in relation to language learning. Serious criticism was put forward by researchers such as Dulay & Burt (1973, 1974a) who challenged the feasibility to provide an adequate explanation of second language acquisition. They argued that "children do not organize L2 on the basis of transfer or comparison with their L1, but rely on their ability to construct the L2 as an independent system." (Ellis, 1985, p.28). Chomsky (1959) also challenged the value of the behaviorists' view of language learning. He argued that language learning is a developmental and creative process rather than a mechanical one. Lenneberg (1967) emphasized the biological prerequisites of language. He argued that a "child's brain was specially adapted to the process of language acquisition." (Ellis 1985, p.44). The criticism of behaviorist learning theory thus led to a new framework for L2 research and teaching.

In order to have a good understanding of the processes of second language acquisition, the study of the nature of
L2 learners' errors became significant. A number of studies were carried out and revealed that the vast majority of errors produced by L2 learners were developmental, and largely independent of the nature of their mother tongue (Dulay and Burt 1974, Bailey et al 1974). The occurrence of errors started to be seen as a natural phenomenon in the continuous process of language development, and viewed as the learner's active contribution to second language acquisition rather than a sign of mother tongue habits and non-learning. The appearance of three important studies "The Significance of Learners' Errors" (Corder 1967); "Approximative Systems of Foreign Language Learners'" (Nemser 1971); "Interlanguage" (Selinker 1972) had a major impact on the attitude towards learners' errors, and set the foundation for interlanguage studies.

The term interlanguage (IL) was first used by Selinker (1972). It refers to the system constructed by the learners on the basis of the interaction with the data they are exposed to, and reflects the systematic knowledge of a second language independent of both the learner's mother tongue and the target language. IL theory generated research with a focus on morphology (Dulay and Burt 1973, 1974b; Bailey et al 1974; Krashen et al 1978), syntax (Dittmar 1980; Dulay et al. 1982; Schumann 1979), lexical
items (Blum-kulka and Levenston 1978); and learning strategies (Fillmore, W. 1976; 1979). The concept of 'hypothesis-testing' was used to explain how the L2 learner progressed along the interlanguage continuum. The regular application of hypotheses by L2 learners indicate that they make errors when testing out certain hypotheses about the nature of the language they learn.

Other studies have also tried to describe the IL communication process, that is, how the learner makes use of the IL system for communicative purposes. Tarone (1977), for instance, noted that code-switching is more likely when the first and second languages have close cognates. Piranian (1979) found that American university students learning Russian relied more on avoidance, whereas learners in a natural learning environment used paraphrases too. Bialystok (1983) suggests that "the best strategy users are those who have adequate formal proficiency in the target language and are able to modify their strategy selection to account for the nature of the specific concept to be conveyed" (p.116).

The area of IL speech production has received considerable attention too. At present, there is a rapidly developing interest in analyzing the interactional aspects of communication. A lot of effort has been devoted to
discovering how the learner uses his/her IL system to deal with situations when his/her L2 knowledge is insufficient for the attainment of a particular communicative goal (Bialystok and Frohlich 1977; Paribakht 1984; and Chen 1990). It is in this area that the present study will concentrate. This study investigates the patterns of communication strategies used by non-native speakers (NNS) in varying communication contexts in order to understand and explain the relationships between their communication strategies and their IL systems more adequately.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND NS-NNS INTERACTION

Since the 1970's, many studies have been devoted to the investigation of L2 learners' learning processes. Researchers have become increasingly interested in the behavior and performance of learners, and the development of communicative competence which involves both the knowledge of linguistic forms and the ability to use the linguistic forms grammatically and socially correctly. Those studies are designed to reveal and describe the general principles that govern L2 learners' target language use and discover certain features of the learners' IL performance. The study of communication strategies has become one of the most
interesting areas that draws considerable attention from researchers.

The beginning of the study of communication strategies can be traced back to Selinker's paper entitled, "Interlanguage" (1972), in which he regarded certain kinds of errors made by the L2 learners as a by-product of their effort to apply the inadequate linguistic knowledge of the target language to express their meaning in spontaneous speech. Varadi (1983) was the first to investigate this phenomenon experimentally. He looked at the adjustment phenomenon, that is, how the learner finds an adjusted meaning within his communicative capabilities to achieve his aim. He found that various factors such as the learner's proficiency level, his ability to "activate" his competence, and his assessment of the relative importance of the parts of his intended message play a prominent role in his decision as to what extent the message adjustment would be carried out. He pointed out that there is a possibility that error-free speech is "achieved at the expense of abandoning the learner's optimal meaning" (p.95) and errors are made "largely due to the learner's refusal to compromise his optimal meaning despite the inordinate gap that exists between his optimal meaning and his encoding capabilities in the target language." (p.95)
Since then, more and more studies have been conducted in this area. Tarone, Cohen, and Dumas (1976) provided a framework for communication strategies in this area. They identified several distinct types of communication strategies commonly observable in IL and redefined in a detail manner the notion of communication strategy. Tarone (1981) attempted to make a clarification of what is meant by the term “communication strategy.” She proposed that, “communication strategies are descriptive of the learners’ pattern of use of what they know as they try to communicate with speakers of the target language.” She also pointed out that “communication strategies have an interactional function, as they are used for a joint negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer” (p.285). Bialystok (1983) investigated “who uses which strategy when and with what effect.” The focus of her study was on strategies learners employ when faced with a gap in their vocabulary. Haastrup and Phillipson (1983) concentrated their studies on achievement strategies. They confirmed that L1-based strategies seem to be least effective, whereas L2-based strategies are the most likely to lead to understanding. Other researchers such as Paribakht (1984), Chen (1990) and Dornyei (1995) studied the lexical and interactional levels and also on the teachability of communication strategies.
Through these studies, a better knowledge of the L2 learner's learning process and its effect on second language acquisition has been obtained.

In the literature, terms like "production strategy" and "learning strategy" have been used interchangeably with communication strategies. To clear the confusion, it is necessary to explain the differences between them. Tarone (1981) made it clear that a learning strategy is "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language - to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence" (p.290). The desire is not to communicate but to learn the target language. Learning strategies include memorization or repetition of troubling features in the target language for the purpose of pure learning instead of communication. A production strategy, on the other hand, is "an attempt to use one's linguistic system efficiently and clearly, with a minimum of effort" (p.289). She suggests that production strategies "lack the interactional focus on the negotiation of meaning" (p.289). The use of prefabricated patterns, discourse planning, and rehearsal are classified as production strategies because they simplify the task of speaking in a particular situation.
The most generally accepted definition of communication strategies appears to have been offered by the following researchers. Communication strategies are seen by Tarone, Cohen & Dumas (1976) as "a systematic attempt by the learner to express or decode meaning in the target language, in situations where the appropriate systematic target language rules have not been formed" (p.287). Their approach tries to account for the errors produced by non-native speakers. Communication strategies are also seen as the product of process-level phenomena. They are problem-oriented. According to Corder (1981), communication strategies are devices employed by L2 learners when they encounter problems in L2 communication because there is a lack of balance between means and ends. "The learner will sometimes wish to convey messages which his linguistic resources do not permit him to express successfully" (p.104). Faerch and Kasper (1983) not only classify communication strategies as being problem-oriented, but also treat them as mental phenomena. They see communication strategies as "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal" (p.36). Tarone (1981) further defines communication strategies in terms of interaction. Communication strategies are seen as "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). From this perspective, communication strategies are viewed as the “negotiation of an agreement on meaning” between interlocutors (p.288).

Perhaps because of the different interpretations of communication strategies, much empirical research has been undertaken from different approaches, and various typologies of communication strategies have been proposed. Tarone (1977) notes that code-switching is more likely when the first and second languages have close cognates. Bialystok (1983b) found that advanced learners use significantly more L2-based strategies and significantly fewer L1-based strategies than less advanced learners, and the most efficient strategies are those which are L2-based. L1-based strategies are those where the learner relies on the knowledge of his or her first language, including those like code-switching (a word, a phrase or a sentence is inserted from a language other than the TL or the speaker switches back and forth between the native language and target language), literal translation (the learner translates an L1 form), foreignizing (the learner uses a non-L2 form but tries to make it a L2 form). L2-based strategies are those where the learner relies on the existing knowledge of L2 to
compensate for communication breakdown, for example, paraphrase and direct appeal.

In addition, studies of the effects of situations on the choice of communication strategies was done by Piranian (1979). The study (reported by Tarone, 1981) shows that learners of Russian who had some extracurricular exposure to Russian were found to use strategies more often and more effectively than their peers whose Russian experience was limited to the classroom environment. Furthermore, the results of Paribakht's study (1984) suggests that learners, at the earlier stages of L2 learning, "draw more often on their other knowledge sources such as world and paralinguistic knowledge in order to compensate for the limitations of their more specific TL knowledge than they do at more advanced states of their L2 learning" (p.41). He concludes that "a speaker's effective use of strategies and his/her level of TL proficiency appear to be related" (p.41).

The field of studies has also broaden its scope by focusing on input to the learner and the interactions in which learners engage. An important consideration in the investigation of learners' interactions is how the native speakers talk to the nonnative speakers, known as "foreigner talk." The term was introduced by Erguston (1971) who
characterized foreign talk as slower rate of speech, louder speech, longer pauses, common vocabulary, few idioms, greater use of gestures, more repetition, shorter utterances, etc.

The nature of foreign talk has also been the subject of much investigation in recent years. Long (1980) pointed out that there are more instances of comprehension checks, confirmation checks, expansions, requests for clarification, and self and other repetitions in discourse involving NNSs than in discourse involving only two NSs. Gass and Varonis (1985) found out that the kind of language used to NNSs varied as a function of the NS’s ongoing assessment and reassessment of a NNS’s ability to understand and to be understood. The researchers are concerned with the function of modified input and modified interaction for learners. As Krashen (1980) states that in order for acquisition to take place learners need to have comprehensible input.

Although much research has been undertaken with regard to communication strategies and the nature of the talk of NS to NNS, very little work has been done to investigate the use of communication strategies applied by L2 learners in real-life communication situations. Most of the previous studies on communication strategies have been restricted to classroom environments, and data elicitation has been
usually well-controlled. Tarone (1977), for example, showed pictures to students and asked them to describe them in order to elicit students' communication strategies. However, the experimental conditions lacked the interactional aspects of normal communication as the learners didn't get any feedback from the listeners. Hamayan and Tucker (1979) used a story-retelling technique in their research. In this case, the data may have been biased by the memory span of the subjects. The data may be complicated due to a lapse of memory. Research done by Chen (1990) involved a concept-identification task as the communication task. Each subject in his study was required to describe two concrete and two abstract concepts to a native speaker in an interview situation. Only two native speakers participated in the study, during which they were not allowed to make comments, except "I don't understand; I don't get it; I'm not clear; I'm not following you; Could you tell me more?" There was no real cooperative activity underway at all. The situation was not close to a real-life situation where the native speaker (NS) may work out with the non-native speaker (NNS) what he or she means.

Some researchers have attempted to make their studies resemble real life situations. Paribakht (1984) designed a study involving oral production and interaction between the
subjects and their interlocutors so that natural interaction would occur. The task involved conveying a concept to a native-speaker interlocutor. Interaction between the subject and the interlocutor continued until a given concept was recognized or regarded as identified. The researcher attempted to make the communicative tasks resemble realistic situations as closely as possible, and tried to avoid the possibility of subjective judgement (each subject talking to a different interlocutor). However, the task of the experiment was confined to describing concepts, which may encourage the use of certain communication strategies and discourage the use of others.

As regard to the interactional patterns of learners with native speakers, there are relatively fewer studies than that of the function of modified input from native speakers.

In the following chapter, I will present my study on the issue of ESL learners' interactional patterns and their communication strategies in real-life situations.
CHAPTER TWO

TERMINOLOGY

This chapter presents terminology relevant to this research followed by a description of the taxonomy of communication strategies applicable to this research.

2.1 TERMINOLOGY

2.1.1 Communication Problems

Communication problems are defined in this study as the result of lack of comprehension either on the L2 learner's side or on the native speaker's (NS) side. In the first case, the L2 learner signals that he/she is in trouble in putting across what he/she wants to say or understanding what the native speaker says. In the second case, the NS shows that there is a difficulty of understanding what the L2 learner tries to say. Due to a failure to understand one another, both sides realize the necessity of further negotiation. In this way, they need to take a number of turns to complete the interaction.

2.1.2 Communication Strategies

The term, communication strategy, following the commonly accepted definition, is used in this study as L2
learners' ways of compensating for their limited competence in the target language system. Communication strategies are learners' attempts to use a restricted linguistic system for communication. They are often adopted at times of difficulty in expression and reception. The adoption of communication strategies is associated with the learner's recognition of his/her insufficient knowledge of the TL and his/her behavior when faced with problems in communication. The behavior could comprise risk-taking behavior by which the learner attempts to bridge the gap between his or her linguistic knowledge and the linguistic knowledge of the TL interlocutor. The L2 learner can also show a cooperative behavior by negotiating an agreement on meaning between the two interlocutors when he or she believes there is a shared meaning. In the situation where learners believe that there is an unbridgeable gap, they may avoid any attempt to communicate what they intend to say.

2.1.3 Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is a term introduced by Hymes (1972) to refer to the ability of speakers to use the resources of their L1. Elaborated by Canale and Swain (1980), they expanded it to include linguistic, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Linguistic
competence refers to knowledge of the language system; sociolinguistic competence refers to "the appropriate usage of stylistic variants of linguistic system based on a shared knowledge of social norms" (Tarone, 1981, p.287); and strategic competence refers to the ability to use communication strategies to cope with communicative problems without necessarily considering situational appropriateness. As this study focuses on learners' performance in dealing with communication problems in their L2 communication and their patterns of communication strategy use, I am only dealing with one component of communicative competence, the strategic competence.
2.2 CATEGORIES/CODING

Various categorizations of communication strategies have been proposed based on the information gained in research (Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976), Tarone (1978), Bialystok & Frohlich (1980), Faerch and Kasper (1984), and Paribakht (1984).) The taxonomy of strategies developed for the present study is based on the combination of those of Tarone et al (1983a) and Faerch & Kasper (1984). Tarone et al identify the types of communication strategies commonly observable in interlanguage from phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical aspects. The taxonomy provided by Faerch and Kasper is based on how learners might behave when faced with problems in communication. As they notice, learners' choice of strategies are governed by two different approaches to problem-solving: solving the problem or avoiding the problem. There is a close relationship between problem, type of behavior and type of strategy. In terms of the types of communication strategies used by the learners in the present study, L2 learners demonstrated three basic kinds of phenomena: (1) when faced with problems in communication, L2 learners used any way they could to deal with the problems by themselves, that is, they rely on their own effort to get the problem solved; (2) when a gap in the communication occurred, both the learner and the
other interlocutor negotiated an agreement by exchanging
enough information so that both of them made sure that they
were talking about the same concept, (3) when problems
arose, L2 learners may have tried to communicate a meaning
at first but then gave up the effort. Based on the
phenomena appeared in the study, three major L2-based
communicative strategies were identified: achievement
strategies, cooperative strategies, and reduction strategies.

The following is further explanation of these three
communication strategies. Within each category, further
differentiation is made according to the specific
information obtained in my data.

2.2.1 Achievement Strategies

Achievement strategies are governed by the effort-
making behavior of the learner when he/she decides to keep
to the original communication activity at the time when the
TL knowledge is insufficient. Achievement strategies are
activated by the strong desire to make an effort to reach
the communication goal. This occurs when the individual
decides to try to solve his/her problems by himself/herself
and succeeds in doing so without seeking joint effort. The
following are the sub-categories of achievement strategies.
A. Paraphrase: The learner replaces an L2 item or message by rewording it in an alternate way.

Example 2-1  "I don't suppose to asking directly how much the hours, the other way to say, uh(.) not as-as straight." (Appendix E, line 66-68)

B. Circumlocution: The learner attempts to express an L2 item by describing its context through using a large number of words and going around the meaning.

Example 2-2  "E: Uh huh. In- I came last two weeks ago, and I ask about the soccer and they say uh (.4) uh there is a:: team, but I-I don't know (. ) the :, they told me the:: abbreviation word.  
NS: AYSL?  
E: Yeah, what does, what does it mean?"

(Appendix C, line 56-63)

C. Restructuring: The learner realizes that he/she cannot complete his/her communication goal, thus he/she gets around the intended meaning by restructuring the utterance.

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Example 2-3  "how many teams are-are in the: in the:
one: how-how many people having a
              team?" (Appendix C, line 159-160)

D. Self-repair: The learner notices the grammatical
mistake and self-corrects it immediately.
Example 2-4 "And I (.) be happy. (hh) No I was
happy." (Appendix G, line 121)

E Semantic Field: The learner replaces a L2 form with
another which shares some semantic elements with the
target concept but does not exactly communicate the
desired meaning.
Example 2-5 "M: She has the: (.) the safe, a safe,
            child child-like,
            NS: Uh like a jacket, like you can
            strap on? .
            M: Yeah."
            (Appendix D, line 139-144)

2.2.2 Cooperative Strategies

Cooperative strategies are governed by the attempt of
the learner to get the problem solved on a cooperative
basis. If the learner fails to communicate what he or she
intends to say, he/she signals to his/her interlocutor that
he/she is experiencing a communicative problem and that
he/she needs assistance, or if he/she realizes the existence of a shared problem, he/she tries to make a contribution to the solution which requires both interlocutors to co-operate so as to reach the goal of communication. These strategies are often used when the individual does not succeed in communicating his/her intended meaning by using a non-cooperative strategy. Thus a cooperative strategy is secondary.

A. Direct Appeal: The learner requests direct assistance from the native speaker to supply the desired term.

Example 2-6 "Yeah, what does, what does it mean?"

(Appendix C, line 63)

B. Indirect Appeal: The learner seeks help by means of a pause, hesitation, eye gaze, etc.

Example 2-7 "V: (.) Ok, I was one year with the permit, and: (.) last day when the: (. .) paper: expired, uh I did:: (. 6)

NS: Driver's test?

V: Yeah, yes."

(Appendix G, line 103-109)

C. Negotiation: This involves a joint problem-solving effort by both the learner and the other interlocutor, usually taking several turns before reaching an agreement on the meaning.
Example 2-8  "R: Yeah, the weather is too hot. Do you know uh (.) uh how, how the weather is?

NS: How the weather is?

R: Aha, how many grades?

NS: How, what degree?

R: Yeah.

NS: How high the temperature is?

R: Uh-um

NS: Probably about 90 degree."

(Appendix F, line 52-67)

When the NNS requested the temperature of the day from the NS, the NNS used the word weather which caused some confusion, as we can see that the NS immediately questioned the sentence (e.g. how the weather is?). In order to solve the problem, both the NNS and NS took several turns at negotiating an agreement on the meaning. First, the NNS changed a way of request "how many grades?", trying to give clearer information. Then, the NS tried to paraphrase it (e.g. what degree? How high the temperature is?) to ensure that both of them were talking about the same thing.
2.2.3 Reduction Strategies

Reduction strategies are attempts to do away with a communication problem by avoidance behavior. When the learner is involved in a communication problem, he or she may attempt to get around what is intended to say, or gives up when he or she finds what is necessary for the expressing of a meaning is not available at the time or wants to avoid making errors.

A. Message Reduction: The learner, when confronted by a problem, talks less and less precisely about what he/she intended to say. This is often seen as a vague general talk.

Example 2-9 "like that, or what time is start the first shift, the second shift, for the (.4) other shift, but the (.15) (Appendix E, line 73-75)

The NNS wanted to use words "graveyard shift" to convey the message. But a problem of locating the word prohibited the NNS from expressing herself precisely. She hesitated a few seconds, trying to recall the word, but gave it up by reducing the information of the intended message.

B. Message Abandonment: The learner runs into difficulty in the process of communication and stops in the middle of talking without seeking any help.
Example 2-10  "NS: Do you travel? Do you travel?

V: Yes, I like, uh: where we are
going?

NS: Where am I going? Where have I
been, or where do I want to go?

M: Ok."

(Appendix G, line 152-159)

The NNS intended to express where they would go if they
like traveling. The NS, however, didn't understand what the
NNS really meant. The NS requested clarification by asking
three different questions. Instead of providing more
information, the NNS just replied "Ok" which showed a
shutting down of her message.
CHAPTER THREE
THE STUDY

3.1 HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this study is to explore the learners' use of communication strategies in natural, non-classroom environments. In their process of using language for communication, learners' choices of communication strategies have been identified and examined. My hypotheses are:

(1) a wide range of communication strategies will be used by the L2 learners in natural situations.

(2) communication strategies used in natural situations will be more oriented towards goal-reaching and cooperation, that is, learners might use more achievement strategies and cooperative strategies in order to fulfil their communication goals.

(3) regardless of L2 learners' native language background, their communication strategies tend to be based on L2. This is based on the notion that real-life contexts will influence positively the learners' choice of communication strategies.
3.2 SUBJECTS

Six adult L2 learners at Corona-Norco Adult School (CNAS) were the subjects of this study. For confidentiality, their actual names are not used. There were five females and one male. They were all immigrants from Mexico of similar age (around 30 years old) and socioeconomic backgrounds (from ordinary families with a few years of high school education and some working experience). They were in the intermediate-level class at CNAS for over six months. Before being assigned to the intermediate level class, they took an oral assessment test called the Registration Test, designed by CNAS. The test is designed to evaluate how much the student knows about grammar and how well he or she is able to communicate in English. Students who demonstrated a mastery of basic skills in understanding, speaking, reading and generally correct use of grammar (for example, able to response corresponding questions in present perfect and/or present perfect continuous tenses) were placed in the intermediate level class. After 100 hours of study at the school, these students were asked to take a pretest for level B of the CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System). The test is used as a way to find out whether a student is placed in the right level and which areas are the strongest and weakest in a student’s
language ability. The six subjects in my study all passed the assessment tests and were students in the intermediate class during the time of my data collection.

3.3 METHODS

The study was done with students of my ESL class at Corona-Norco Adult School. I gave the class of 14 students an assignment to record one of their natural conversations with native speakers. I listed several activities for my students to choose, including (1) seeking information about its summer programs at the Corona Parks and Recreation Department, (2) getting information on how to open an account at a bank, (3) finding out how to get a library card at the Corona library, or (4) spontaneous conversations with co-workers or friends. Eight students provided me with their activity tapes. Three students did tape-recording of their conversations with public service persons. Another three students did spontaneous conversations. The other two tapes were incomplete due to mechanical problems with tape recorders. Thus, of the eight recordings, six of them were used. As this study aims at using spontaneous and interactional data to investigate L2 learners' use of communication strategies in natural communicative situations, the data collected serve the purpose.
All data were collected during the second semester of the school year 1996-97 in the form of audio-recording. They were subsequently transcribed and included in Appendix A, along with transcription conventions.
4.1 SUMMARY OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Table 1 provides an overview of major types of communication strategies employed by the subjects. A total of 39 instances of communication strategies were observed. There is a high frequency in the use of achievement and cooperative strategies (approximately ninety percent) and a very low frequency of reduction strategies (approximately ten percent). All communication strategies found in this study were L2-based, including achievement strategies, cooperative strategies and reduction strategies. According to Table 1, about forty-six percent of the strategies used were those of achievement strategies, and about forty-four percent of the strategies used were those of cooperative strategies.

Three subcategories of achievement and cooperative strategies appeared to be the preferred strategies among the subjects. Restructuring was used by five of the six subjects. Indirect appeal and negotiation were also favored by most of the subjects at the time of communication breakdown (four out of six subjects). Indirect appeal was used far more than direct appeal (in a ratio of eleven to
one). Reduction strategies were the least used strategies. The only reduction strategies used were message reduction and message abandonment. No L1-based strategies were found in the sample data.
Table 1. Frequency Summary of Communication Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Information Seeking</th>
<th>Spontaneous Conversation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sonia</td>
<td>Erika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrase</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumlocution</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructuring</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-repair</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic Field</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Appeal</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Appeal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message Reduction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message Abandonment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 ANALYSIS

Three of the subjects (Erika, Sonia and Melba) recorded their interaction with native speakers at the Corona Parks and Recreation Department. They are married with children, so they went there to find out what programs were offered to children and adults. They used a full range of communication strategies which are represented: circumlocution, restructuring, semantic field, direct appeal, indirect appeal, and negotiation. When they went to the Parks and Recreation Department to seek some information about particular programs, they ran into a considerable number of difficulties. Interestingly, they all demonstrated both risk-taking behavior and cooperative behavior which aimed at solving communicative problems. They either held the floor while seeking ways to solve problems by themselves or called for assistance through appealing. No reduction strategies were used. This probably can be accounted for by the specific communication task of information seeking and the awareness of the importance of the information they needed for themselves and family members. The following are some of the examples of the achievement strategies that the learners used.
Erika wanted to know about the adult soccer team and art class, but she wasn’t sure of the name of the team and the word art. Let’s see how she tried to work these out.

Example 4-1

NS: So you can always mail it in or come back to the office, and drop it off.

E: Uh huh. In- I came last two weeks ago, and I ask about the soccer and they say uh (.4) uh there is a:: team, but I-I don't know (.) the:, they told me the:: (..) abbreviation word,

NS: AYSL?

E: Yeah, what does, what does it mean?

(Appendix C, Line 53-63)

Example 4-2

E: Do you know uh the neighborhood, uh there's a::, some-some teachers that is uh:, I do remember, that two years ago, I saw a teacher uh that was teaching, uh for uh, what kind of uh-uh::, when you go to, when you want to paint, uh the neighborhood, (.4) I don't know, I-I want to know, if-if still live there (.4), if the teacher is still teaching?

NS: (..)For art?

E: Ar:art?
In the above two examples, the subject made good use of achievement strategies, specifically circumlocution, to compensate for her unavailable items. She was aware that she did not know the lexical items, AYSL (the name of the soccer team) in example 4-1, and the word art in example 4-2. Her lexical limitations made it difficult for her to produce fluent utterances. However, instead of signaling for help, she appeared confident that she could communicate what she wanted. In both of the situations, she kept on talking by describing the character of the troublesome items so as to let the native speaker make sense of what her fragmentary hints and attempts meant. She didn't wait for the native speaker to get a chance to break in.

The next three examples took place when the subjects Melba and Erika tried to get information about when the summer programs would start, who the team players were and the necessity of a life vest. Melba has a daughter and wants to know about the swimming class; Erika, on the other hand, wants to know about the volleyball team for herself. They applied different communication strategies to cope with their problems.
Example 4-3

M: Ok, what beginning the:, the date for beginning,
NS: The date they begin our summer programs?
M: Yeah, please.

(Appendix D, Line 32-36)

Example 4-4

E: Aha, and-and how, how many teams are-are in the:, in the: one:, how-how many people having a team?
NS: A team like volleyball?
E: For a volleyball.

(Appendix C, line 159-164)

Example 4-5

NS: Yeah. She just needs the swimming trunks and a towel and they provide the lessons for her.
M: She has the: (.) the safe, a safe, child child-
like,
NS: Uh like a jacket, like you can strap on?.
M: Yeah.

(Appendix D, line 136-144)

The selection of restructuring the meaning of what was previously expressed in examples 4-3 and example 4-4 reveals that the subjects considered the already executed utterance insufficient and grammatically incorrect as a means of communicating their intended meaning. Thus, they alter the
way of expression by changing from what beginning the: to the date for beginning in example 4-3, and from how many teams are-are in the: in the: one, to how -how many people having a team? in example 4-4. It is not difficult to see that the subjects had second thoughts about the adequacy of their completed utterances. In the case of example 4-5, the subject had trouble in retrieving the special term life vest. However, she identified that safe belongs to the same semantic field functionally, thus she used this strategy to help the native speaker to locate the item for her.

In addition to achievement strategies, the subjects also relied on cooperative strategies, specifically, direct and indirect appeal, and negotiation. Being unable to access the appropriate word or concept, or having uncertainty about the correctness of the information, they try to extend their resources to fulfill the communication tasks. Some of the communication difficulties led to the application of cooperative strategies, as seen in the following:

Example 4-6

E:  ...they told me the:: (. ) abbreviation work,

NS:  AYSL?

E:  Yeah, what does, what does it mean?

(Appendix C, line 58-63)
Example 4-7

E: Uh: (.5) how can I, how can I take a: application for::, how much do I need to pay for::?

NS: To enroll? On that brochure, it (comes out

E: (Uh huh.

(Appendix C, line 37-41)

Example 4-8


NS: Eight and nine? $25 for residents, and $30 (for

S: (Yeah, for each one, each one?

NS: Each session.

S: Each session?

NS: Each child.

S: Oh ok.

(Appendix B, line 53-66)

Direct appeal, in comparison with the indirect appeal, is rarely used among the six subjects. In fact, only one was used, in example 4-6, the learner directly asked the NS what does it mean?. The subjects in this study primarily use indirect rather than direct appeal. What made the subject to choose to use direct appeal (example 4-6) can be inferred that there wasn't any linguistic knowledge or world knowledge that the subject could draw on to decode the
abbreviation form AYSL, the name of the soccer league. In order to get that information, the subject overtly requested assistance.

In all the other cases, the subjects either relied on indirect appeal to signal the native speaker that they were experiencing a communication problem and needed assistance as in example 4-7, how much do I need to pay for::?; or on negotiation to clarify the potential misunderstanding between the two as in example 4-8. The subject in example 4-7 had difficulty in retrieving the word to enroll, She paused to signal the need of assistance. This seemed quite successful as the NS immediately filled in the word enroll. The subject in example 4-8 has two children. She assumed that the fee of the program might be for each child. When the native speaker responded each session, it caused some confusion. The subject wasn't sure whether each session costed $30 for her two children or one, thus she requested clarification, asking Each session? This gave the native speaker a signal that they clearly hadn't reached a mutual agreement on the intended meaning. Then the native speaker quickly clarified what she meant by answering Each child. Finally they reached an understanding, as we see the L2 speaker respond Oh ok.
Conversations of the other three subjects (Juana, Rick and Vicky) were not task oriented. They were natural, spontaneous conversations. The similarity between these subjects was that their interactions were with native speakers whom they knew, and the purpose of their interactions was not for information-seeking. Their interactions were just spontaneous conversations.

The communication strategies employed by the these three subjects mainly fell into the kinds of achievement and cooperative strategies similar to those used by the three subjects who did information-seeking tasks. In addition, I found that there were more kinds of communication strategies used such as self-repair, message reduction and message abandonment. Two of the subjects recorded their conversations at their workplace and the third subject at her home.

The following are some examples of one subject’s use of communication strategies such as self-repair, message reduction and message abandonment.

Example 4-9

V: (.) Ok, I was one year with the permit, and:
(.)last day when the: (. ) The paper: expired, uh I did: the (.6)

NS: Driver’s test?
V: Yeah, yes. I did the driver's test, and the secretary told me, tell me, told me uh oh that's the last day.

(Appendix G, line 101-109)

Example 4-10

V: ...And I (.) be happy. (hh ) No, I was happy.

(Appendix G, line 121)

Example 4-11

V: ...ok, I need think it when I (.), I is, I want travel, trable, tr-(.4) (hh hh), nothing, I don't know, (hh hh) ok.

(Appendix G, line 183-185)

Example 4-12

NS: Do you travel? Do you travel?

V: Yes, I like, uh: where we are going? (hh hh)

NS: Where am I going? Where have I been? Or where do I want to go?

V: Ok.

(Appendix G, line 152-159)

In the case of examples 4-9, we can see that the subject was trying to use the correct tense, she self-repaired the tense from told to tell and settled down on told to make her tense right. In example 4-10 and 4-11, the same kind of phenomenon also occurred. She noticed the
mistakes of *I (.) be happy and I* is, and immediately self-repaired them by saying *No, I was happy and I want travel.* In those cases, the incorrect grammatical use of the language doesn't seem to impair the native speaker's understanding of what the subject wanted to express. However, the subject (Vicky) constantly paid attention to her grammatically incorrect utterances.

When she anticipated a potential problem, either a production or an understanding, and realized the difficulty in finishing the communication task, she abandoned her message. This is reflected in her using message abandonment. For example, in example 4-11, she said *I want travel, trabel, tra- (hh ), nothing, I don't know, (hh hh ) ok.* She was not sure of the pronunciation of the word *travel.* First, she tried to self-repair it, and after trying to repair it twice, she just gave up which may allow her to avoid producing an incorrect utterance.

Similar avoidance behavior is also found in example 4-12. When the subject asked *uh where we are going?,* it caused confusion for the native speaker, who quickly required more detail in the degree of clarity (*Where am I going? Where have I been? Or where do I want to go?*). Instead of trying again to help the listener to identify the
intended meaning, she chose to cut short by saying Ok, without any elaboration.

Message reduction appeared only once among all the subjects. The subject (Juana) used it during an interaction with her patient in a senior citizen care center when they talked about employment. In her previous ESL class, she obtained some information on how to do an interview. During work, she had a spontaneous conversation with her patient on the topic. When she talked about the different shifts at work, she experienced difficulty in retrieving the word graveyard. She hesitated a second and then continued her talk by adopting the strategy of message reduction. The following illustrates this:

Example 4-13

J: Exactly, the teacher (.) uh say yesterday, I don't suppose to asking directly how much the hours, the other way to say, un not as-as straight.

NS: What do you expect me to be here, or something like that.

J: Like that. Or what time is start the first shift, the second shift, for (.4) uh (. other shift, but the (.15).

NS: You put your best foot forward and you appear interested,...
In example 4-13, the subject and the native speaker talked about what was appropriate or not appropriate to talk about at a job interview. When the subject mentioned that her teacher said it was inappropriate to request a particular work shift directly, she encountered difficulty in remembering the word "graveyard" that she had learned the previous day. As we can see, she paused for a while, waiting for the word to come to her, but it failed to do so. In order to continue talking, she chose other shift, a less precise word, to reduce the message.

L1-based strategies were not found in this study. Previous studies (Paribakht 1985; and Chen 1990) of the infrequent application of L1-based strategies suggest that the large distance between L1 and L2 is the factor that reduces learners' tendency to use L1-based strategies (Persian vs. English; Chinese vs. English). It is argued that the adoption of L1-based strategies depends upon the typological relatedness between the learner's L1 and L2 (Taron, 1977 and Kellerman, 1977, 1978). However, in my study, all the subjects are Spanish speakers whose language has many formal similarities with English. Since there is not a large distance between the two languages, it seems reasonable to assume that L2 learners in the study might
have used some of the L1-based strategies. But such a phenomenon has not been identified in this study.

4.3 DISCUSSION

The results of this study support the hypothesis that L2 learners find many possible ways to deal with their real-life communication problems. The subjects applied a wide range of communication strategies. Table 1 portrays the full range of communication strategies. Their distribution varies considerably among achievement, cooperative, and reduction strategies, covering paraphrase, circumlocution, restructuring, self-repair, semantic field, direct appeal, indirect appeal, negotiation, message reduction, message abandonment and topic abandonment. Although the subjects varied in their strategy choices, they tended to use L2-based achievement and cooperative strategies, specifically restructuring, indirect appeal, and negotiation. Reduction strategies were the least used of the strategies observed. No L1-based communication strategies have been noted in this study even though there is a little distance between the L1 and L2.

It has been suggested in Piranian's study (1979) that learners may use more strategies in a natural environment.
than in a classroom. The results of my study are consistent with his conclusions. The subjects in this study employed a great number of communication strategies. The high frequency of communication strategies used by the L2 learners can be explained by the fact that the learners, who have insufficient knowledge of the TL and are in real-life situations where no teachers or classmates can aid them, have to rely on an extensive use of communication strategies before they can convey their intended meanings. I found that, in interactions, the L2 learners seem to be willing to invest time and effort, and want to communicate. Also, contrary to the classroom setting where correct L2 use is emphasized, L2 learners may feel less inhibited about making mistakes in real-life situations. They may be concerned less about whether a structure, an item, or an expression is grammatically correct. Their attention may focus more on the conveying of information and keeping the channels of communication open.

The high frequency of achievement and cooperative strategies selected by the subjects (about ninety percent), as compared with very few instances of reduction (about ten percent) may lie in the fact L2 learners, immigrants with hopes and dreams, are highly motivated to develop their linguistic skills to deal with every aspect of their lives.
In a situation like information-seeking at the Parks and Recreation Department, whether or not they can acquire correct information for their kids or themselves determines whether they can benefit from some opportunities the government supplies for the public and these particular learners seem to understand that it is up to them to become part of the surrounding community. Their strong desire to clearly understand and be understood demands the use of achievement and cooperative strategies. As for the spontaneous conversation, L2 learners may be driven by the necessity to participate effectively in their social contacts so as to be considered an accepted member of this particular speech community.

Regarding the very few instances of reduction strategies, it is noted that they were used by two of the subjects in situations where the participants were exchanging information. The subjects' selection of reduction strategies may be related to the characteristics of the communication task at that time. In the case of this study, both of the subjects were engaged in casual conversations. The need to give an exact and clear information may not be as strong as that when they are seeking critical information. As Varadi (1983) pointed out in his pilot study that the learner's assessment of the
relative importance of the parts of his or her intended message play a prominent role in his or her decision as to what extent the message adjustment would be carried out.

Direct appeal was used far less than indirect appeal. This could be probably explained by Goffman’s theory (1955) that people are concerned with their images when they present themselves to the world. The subjects preferred indirect appeal as it may serve as a safer way to save face than direct appeal, which may put them in a position of being rejected outright.

L1-based strategies were totally rejected by the subjects in this study. One possible explanation for the total rejection is that the proficiency level of the learners influenced their choices of strategies. All the subjects are intermediate level students. They can cope with some complexity of a language system without the assistance of their L1. This seems consistent with Bialystok’s (1983b) position that advanced learners use significantly more L2 based strategies and significantly fewer L1-based strategies than less advanced learners.

As for the argument that the closer the native language is to the target language, the more likely L1-based strategy is used, my study doesn’t support this suggestion. The previous studies may fail to take into consideration the
type of situations L2 learners are engaged in. Those studies were usually conducted in a classroom environment and might have given learners an impression that they are engaged in a language learning activity. NNSs could take the NS in this academic environment as someone who might be more tolerant with their L1-based expressions. Whereas, in natural situations, L2 learners are actually putting what they have learned in school in performance. They may be concerned more with being identified with the target culture and people. They may realize that the information conveyed should be in the form of mutual understanding. In real-life situations the L2 learner no longer considers the person being spoken to a language helper, but an equal participator in the communication activity.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

The major findings of this study indicate that ESL learners have communication strategies as their resource to deal with difficulties (lexical, structural, and conceptual). The subjects in the study employed a wide variety of communication strategies to overcome their communicative problems. The commonly identified communication strategies used by the subjects were L2-based achievement, cooperative, and reduction strategies. However, achievement and cooperative strategies were favored by the subjects at points of difficulty of communication. It appears that the subjects are willing to take risks in real-life situations and are not concerned too much about making errors. No one adopted any L1-based strategies in the real-life situations. The results of this study support the hypotheses proposed in this study.

5.2 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The investigation of communication strategies used by L2 learners holds promising approach for language learning researchers to understand mental activities and language
behavior involved in the creative process of language learning. As communication strategies are the means by which learners try to reduce the communicative burden to a manageable proportion, it is important to examine L2 learners' communication strategies to discover their effect on interlanguage development in second language acquisition. The development of language teaching materials from this kind of research can make learners aware of problems they might encounter in real-life situations. It can also help ESL instructors become aware of the need to train learners to recognize potential problems that may arise and help them develop more creative and efficient ways to cope with them. Such practice and training may gradually build up learners' communicative competence.

It has been suggested that learners who are exposed to natural input in immersion situations do improve their communicative competence. Investigations of learners of French, for one, (Raupach, 1983) showed that a considerable change in the use of communication strategies was found among those who had stayed a term in France. Bialystok (1983) also confirmed that those who had traveled widely proved to be superior in their L2 strategy use. Evidence given by Tarone (1984) and Willems (1987) indicates that students who are offered more natural input tend to develop
a higher level of communicative competence than those who are in ordinary classrooms.

5.3 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND ESL TEACHING

Many researchers maintain that communication strategy training is possible and desirable. Faerch and Kasper (1980) indicate that "if by teaching we also mean making learners conscious about aspects of their (already existing) behavior, it is obvious that we should teach them about strategies." Chen (1990) suggests that the "syllabus should be designed to create conditions conducive to the development of learners' strategic competence." Dornyei's study (1995) on the teachability of communication strategies pointed to the possibility of developing both the quality and quantity of learners's use of some communication strategies through focused instruction.

The findings of this study demonstrate that significant proportion of real-life L2 communication is problematic and learners need to be able to draw on resources to deal with it. Empowering ESL learners with skills to cope with their communication problems is thus very necessary. Communication strategy training can be integrated into second language programs where the syllabus design is geared towards very specific communicative needs.
of L2 learners. In connection with ESL courses, communication strategies can be seen as devices which enable learners to bridge the gap between classroom interaction and naturalistic situations outside the classroom. By learning how to use communication strategies appropriately, learners will increase their communicative competence in a way which is specific for IL communication.

L2 learners no doubt make use of communication strategies very often in the real-life situations. We should draw learners' attention to their communication behavior and make them realize what communication strategies actually work in what kind of situations. This will orient them to pay attention to their cognitive learning processes. Also, we can create conditions in the classroom so that students, when faced with problems, are guided to use certain devices as aids to deal with the possible life experiences.

In choosing materials and methods, we should take into consideration the relationship between learners' personalities and their preferences for certain types of communication strategies. We also need to be aware of how teaching goals can affect learner's strategy choices. For example, if a teaching goal has a high priority of correctness, it could possibly lead learners to opt for
reduction strategies, as they may simply want to avoid errors in their production.

5.4 APPLICATIONS

Most syllabi designed for ESL teaching at adult schools do not focus on potential communication problems and do not incorporate ways to cope with them. Such syllabi do not provide opportunities for practice in communication strategy use. In order to help L2 learners, it is necessary to design a syllabus that will develop learners' strategic competence through raising their awareness of all kinds of communicative problems. This kind of syllabus could provide appropriate communication strategy training so that they can know how to draw on their own resources.

Exposure to communicative problems through natural dialogues like videotapes, films and television programs as well as natural, spontaneous interaction with native speakers seems of great importance to help learners acquire successful communicative skills which cannot be acquired just through exposure to traditional classroom input. In those cases, learners can be shown and experience situations that they are most likely to encounter in the real world.

The application of communication strategies identified in this study can provide a basis for developing L2 teaching
materials with the aim of preparing L2 learners for successful negotiation of problematic communicative situations. One way of introducing students to these strategies would be to provide L2 models of the use of communication strategies, like the tapes of this study, to let L2 learners identify the communication problems, and evaluate the strategies applied in the situation and analyze the appropriateness of their uses.

The findings of this study show us that an important way to develop learners' communicative competence is to analyze and predict their communicative needs and then relate them to the teaching goals. This seems extremely important to adult ESL learners whose purpose in learning the language is mostly for survival in this country. In fact, language teaching in the last 20 years has already shifted its focus to communicative approaches. Within these approaches, we can include the "strategic approach" (Paribakht, 1984) to L2 teaching, that is to integrate structural and communicative goals with successful strategies.

Results of this study suggest that real life communication is a good way for learners to realize how they can make the best use of their limited resources to accomplish their communicative goals and is also a good way
for teachers to assess and test learners' communicative competence. It is generally acknowledged that placement testing in the adult schools focuses on reading comprehension and grammatical correctness rather than oral communicative competence. Testing of language use in real-life situations or simulated situations has been neglected, though this is probably the most important skill for adult school learners.

5.5 FURTHER STUDIES

Though there are some studies which have identified factors that influence the choice of communication strategy, such as form of language instruction (Piranian, 1979), the learner's native language background and its distance from the target language (Tarone, 1977; Kellerman, 1978), and the speaker's perception of the listener (Tarone, 1981), there are far from enough empirical studies of the factors influencing strategy choice. Tarone (1977) and Corder (1978b, c) proposed a possible relationship between the learner's personality and his/her choice of communication strategies. Corder (1978c) suggested that the nature of the interaction, age, social background, attitude towards the culture related to the language and knowledge of the topic
of conversation may be associated with the adoption of certain communication strategies.

Though a number of factors have been proposed as affecting the speaker's choice of strategy, not much empirical research has examined the influence of the factors on the choice of particular strategy. Further studies of L2 learners actually using the language is warranted.

The present study illustrates how L2 learners operate in the real-life situations. However, as the number of subjects is small and the data are not comprehensive, the study is open to challenge. This study only focuses on how L2 learners cope with their communication problems when their communication situations are different from those in their classrooms. The next step will be to take other factors into consideration, such as the personalities of the learners, their motivation for language learning, and their perception of native speakers.
APPENDIX A

Transcription Convention

The following are the conventions used in transcribing the audio-recorded conversation.

1. (.) - a silence of .2 seconds or less
2. (.3/4) - hesitation
3. (.5) - unfilled pause
4. ( - brackets used to indicate simultaneous speech
5. the-the - a dash indicates a halting speech usually with repetition
6. (hh) laughter
7. : - sound stretch
8. that you need to enter the computer - underlining indicates heavy stress
9. ... indicates the sentence is not finished
APPENDIX B

Information Seeking 1

NS = Native Speaker (a female employee at Corona Parks and Recreation Department.)

S = Sonia (a non-native speaker)

1 NS: You want to know about the classes {in: ?
2 3 S: (Yes. Well, I
4 have two little boys in 9.., I want to know for
5 this summer, what do you have for (. ) the kids?
6 7 NS: Oh our summer brochure isn't {out yet. It comes
8 out
9 10 S: (Uh huh.
11 12 NS: three weeks.
13 14 S: As I live {in Corona,
15 16 NS: {You should get one in the mail, but
17 this {if
18 19 S: (Ok.
20 21 NS: If you want,
22 23 S: Yes please.
24 25 NS: Take this one with you for spring. There are
26 something that still have two or three sessions.
27 28 S: And this is, this is expensive for (. ) the
29 residents? or {it's different?
30 31 NS: (Uh it depends on different
32 33 S: You have {different
34 35 NS: {I think $20 for (. ) the skating.
36 37 S: Uh huh. It's depend uh whether (.4), prices
38 depend on what: activity?
NS: Yeah what the classes, yeah everything is quite different price.

M: Uh huh (.5). So what do you have to recommend for this-this summer for the kids?

NS: Oh I haven't seen the (brochure yet,

S: (Oh.

NS: So really, I don't know what I'll do, I don't know what, what,


NS: Eight and nine? $25 for residents, and $30 (for each one, each one?

S: Each session,

NS: Each session?

S: Each child.

S: Oh ok.

NS: Do you want take this please?

S: Ok.

NS: Cause it may,

S: Uh ok. Thank you.

NS: you're welcome.
APPENDIX C

Information Seeking 2

NS = Native Speaker (a young female employee at Corona Parks and Recreation Department)

E = Erika (a non-native speaker)

1 E: And I um, I want to know how (. ) we can enroll in one team (or
2
3 NS: (For this boy so young?
4
5 E: Uh uh.
6
7 NS: Ok, that's the brochure. Most of those um programs are almost over. Our next brochure comes out in the mail, but on the 2nd of May.
8
9 E: 2nd of May?
10
11 NS: Yeah, and most of the programs start (like in June.
12
13 E: (For summer program.
14
15 NS: Yeah for (summer.
16
17 E: (Aha.
18
19 NS: Just like softball, and swimming.
20
21 E: For right now, uh do yo have (. ) a: space? Uh summer space for (kids?
22
23 NS: (For other kids now?
24
25 E: Aha.
26
27 NS: Uh, no most of them are full, most of them are full, what we have now is in-door soccer, That's full already.
28
29 E: Uh:. (.5) how can I, how can I: take a: application for::, how much do I need to pay for?
NS: To enroll? On that brochure, it comes out
E: (Uh huh.
NS: in them all, it tells you the prices and when the
deadline is,
E: Aha.
NS: (.) And it will get, it has registration from the
back.
E: Mum.
NS: So you can always mail it in or come back to the
office, and drop it off.
E: Uh huh. In- I came last two weeks ago, and I ask
about the soccer and they say uh (.4) uh there is
a:: team, but I-I don't know (.4) the:, they told
me the:: (.4) abbreviation word.
NS: AYSL?
E: Yeah, (what does, what does it mean?
NS: (Ok. (talking to her colleague)
NS2: That's their phone number.
NS: (.25) His name is Richard Martinez, this is home
phone number, this work phone number, ok?
E: I have to call here?
NS: Yes.
E: Oh ok, and they are, they are giving me
information about the:::
NS: They'll let you know if there's more opening or
(what...
E: (Oh ok,-And how about me? I'd, I'd like to: (.)
to play basketball(.) team
NS: Basketball?
Uh huh.

we can take your name down, information
down because teams are already set and if they
need any people, they'll give you a call.

Um-and her um.

Our basketball is, has already started. It won't
start like like (.)

Do you know how much I-I have to: to pay for-for
it?

No, uh it all depends because uh: I think it's uh
three to, to make a league.

I-I have (.). I have to: to have a:: team?

You don't have to have a team, you don't have to ,
but you always go to, into a team, you just pay
the team a certain amount of money.

Oh in and (.). there's no, uh for a less, so some
of the (.). application for the less money or to
pay less money? Because I don't, I don't have
uh::

Um for adult sport?

Aha.

No, (.). for youth,

Yeah, for me.

For youth?

No for me.

No for you no.

Ok, and-and for:

For your child, there is.

Aha, for: yeah I have my girl, my girl
NS: For your child, there are some applications, oh I-
I don't think there are, there any more. (Finding
some forms) This is for, like the AYSL soccer
team.

E: Aha for soccer.

NS: Ok?

E: Yeah. And now: I have another question. And the
volleyball too, I need information for volleyball.

NS: Volleyball,

E: Yeah.

NS: (.5) There's a, a package over there you could
fill out, and that's to make up a team. But if
you want to as an individual, I- I could put you
down in the list, as I say, we put you down on the
list, and if one of the managers needs players, we
give them the list. They call from that list,
they call you.

E: Aha, and-and how, how many teams are in the:
in the: one:, how-how many people having a team?

NS: A team like what?

E: For a volleyball.

NS: For volleyball, I'm not sure,(.) which I think
(finding out information), as about 11, 12 people,
I am not sure, I need to ask Judy, Judy is not
here right now, she is supervising it.

E: Ok, and-and I-I saw a: paper, and do you have time
for a:: a little boy, my boy have 3 years old, and
he's in-in 3 years old, and have summer sport, so

NS: Boys, we don't have for sports. We don't have any
sports, ok so that book right there,

E: Aha.

NS: Brochure, you can go ahead and take one. We have
classes for kids, and(.) there are, there are
almost as same as the one they are going be next,
the next one is coming out which is in the 2nd
week of May.

E: Um and there's a::(. ) a: a: a teacher for a
painting, or::

NS: Yeah right there (talking to someone else).

E: Do you know uh the neighborhood uh, there's a::;
some-some teachers that is uh:, I do remember,
that two years ago, I saw a teacher uh that was
teaching, uh for uh, what kind of uh-uh::, when
you go to, when you want to paint, uh the
neighborhood,(.4) I don't know, I-I want to know,
if-if still live there(.4), if the teacher is
still teaching?

NS: (.5) For art?

E: Ar:-art?

NS: Yeah. Like I said, most of the classes are
already full, and some of them are going to be
over. They are almost over. Uh that brochure
right there give you all the information you need.
APPENDIX D

Information Seeking 3

NS = Native Speaker (a male employee at Corona Parks and Recreation Department.)

M = Melba (a non-native speaker)

M: Hi, uh could you tell me some information about the: preschooling activities for the summer, or summer classes.

NS: We have, we have the: program called playmates, for kid two and five to get ready to go into school, or to get their skills ready to go to school. It’s a: Friday program that is designed from 9:30 in the morning to 2:00 in the afternoon, and they teach like cutting, uh musical plays, puppets, crafts, arts and sports. Uh then we have a variety of programs for kids, uh preschool age through eight, nine years old, uh with the: (. )

M: Because my daughter: um five years old, and up now that sometimes I brought her swimming, or (um

NS: during the (summer

M: (Summer

NS: Yeah during the summer we have T-ball which is a program we, we try to get the kids like this involved to see how interested they would be in sports. It’s a really low key will. It’s for, there’s no win, loss, just try teach the fundamentals. We do have our swimming classes coming for this summer, from beginner up to advance.

M: OK. What beginning? (. ) The date for beginning?

NS: The date for they begin? our summer programs?

M: Yeah, please.
NS: The pools begin after the Memorial day which is in May, but our sessions actually start in June 9th or 16th, I believe.

M: O:K, and when the register?

NS: We have (.)

M: (.)

NS: Yeah, we have another of these brochures that will be coming out in about three weeks and have all our summer programs in it, and they will give you all the information, and it has in this book, there's a registration form.

M: Uh um.

NS: Some are in here, (. ) and the back right here. You can register whatever you want, and you mail this in.

M: Um is a different price, it's for?

NS: Yeah for different activities. T-ball is like $30 for ten weeks, and they go two days a week.

M: How many hours?

NS: It's an hour per section.

M: OK.

NS: Swimming, they go everyday for two weeks, they go from Monday to Friday.

M: Uh um.

NS: And that session is over. And Iren, do you remember what cost is for aquatics for summer?

(Iren giving the answer)

NS: Ok, $24 if you live in Corona, $29 if you don't.

M: Oh.

NS: You are late. (Talking to his co-worker)
M: Ok, and (. ) what are the other classes except—except(.3)  
NS: There have, there are—there're three different locations. There's city park which is out of East Grand,
M: Yeah
NS: Uh then there: Corona (Centennial high school,  
M: (Ok.
NS: Which is out in Rimpau,
M: Uh ok. I—I have to choice (any—any of place.  
NS: (You have the choice depend upon if the class is open. They only take some many kids before they close the class. They want to take 10 kids per class. then you have to go to (different class.  
M: (Do you know the: the hours, the hours for this sector?  
NS: Yeah, they have, they have them in the morning, they have them in the afternoon.
M: Oh ok.
NS: So it's really available.
M: Ok. It's one hour?  
NS: The swim lessons, I think, are 30 minutes? Is that right? Irene, is swim lesson 30 minutes, 35 minutes?  
I: 35 minutes.
NS: 35 minutes for each session,
M: Oh ok.
NS: Half an hour.
M: And: what I have, what (..) what I have to (.).
to bring just the:-the(.) swimming: wear.

NS: Yeah. She just needs the swimming chunks and a
towel and they provide the lessons (for her.

M: (She, she has
the: (..) the safe, a safe, child child-like?

NS: Uh like a jacket, like you can strap on?

M: Yeah.

NS: Yeah she wouldn't need that.

M: No?

NS: No. What they will do is to put her in a pool
where she can stand up and water only comes up to
here.

M: Oh ok.

NS: And they want her to do something, they will pick
her up and hold her and show her how to swim, so

M: Oh yeah.

NS: They don't need that.

M: Li-like that table?

NS: Kind of, yeah kind (of.

M: (Something like that, ok. Ok
(..) thank you very much.

NS: You are welcome.

M: (hh) Bye.

NS: Uh uh. Thank you.
APPENDIX E

Natural Conversation 1

NS = Native Speaker (a senior woman)

J = Non-native Speaker (Juana)

1 NS: Ok, I've found this letter today, it's, it's to a
discourage teenage, because he came in and asked
for a job, and he didn't get it, and this man
wrote in the letter...

5

6 J: Well, I learned something about the interview
yesterday, (.) (how

9 NS: (What, what do they tell you?

10 J: Well, how to dress up, and couple of minors (.)

12 NS: Because they're interested in the type. This kid
made a mistake, because he didn't dress up, he
didn't put a shirt and a tie, and he didn't
have a big smile on his face, and he didn't
have any experience, and the man didn't care about
that (.),

19 J: Well, it's a:

20 NS: It's his attitude (.), (ju:

24 J: (Just put the example the
teacher give you a couple of (.) ideas how to
dress up, the (.) things I don't suppose to do,
when I have the interview, I need to see the man
straight to the (.),

30 NS: Looking in the eye.

32 J: (Looking in the eye, and I don't suppose
to chew gum, I don't suppose to go late,

35 NS: (No,

37 J: (For interview.

39 NS: And something else is, you should find out little
about the business is about before you go there,
so you can show you are interested in learning
even though you don't have the experience.
{(Coughing...)

J: {And other things the teacher say care suppose to
say any thing bad about my last boss or my last
job (.).,

NS: That's correct,

J: And I suppose to spoke that I need my new job (.).
because I need a better opportunity.

NS: That's right. (.5) The kid that didn't get this
job in Ann Lander's (.), he wasn't dressed up, his
first question were, "What are the hours, how many
vocations would I get, and how much do you pay?

J: {Exactly.

NS: {Those were the wrong things to say, because the
man wasn't interested in those things, he was
interested in somebody that want to get in and
help him to improve his business.

J: Exactly, the teacher (.). uh say yesterday, I don't
suppose to asking directly how much the hours, the
other way to say, uh (.). not as-as straight,

NS: What do you expect me to be here? or something
(like that.

J: {Like that, or what time is start the first shift,
the second shift, for the (.4) uh (.). other shift,
but the (.15)

NS: You put your best foot forward and you appear
interested, (.). even though you don't know any
thing about it, but you try to tell them you would
like to learn, even it's to flip hamburgs that you
want to {learn,

J: {Yes.

NS: How to do it, and you would be happy to do it, and
you are not, you don't ...

J: {Well,
NS: (to tell them you are behind in your car payments, and you are, you need really...

J: Or I am short of money.

NS: You are showing that you are interested in their business and they'll get ahead, that's the kind of people they'll hire. This man tells it, and he said you don't get men always get jobs the same they get girls, they case situation, they wear clean shirt and tie, they put their best foot forward, they appear interested.

J: (In a kind,

NS: (In another word, you want to be interested in his business, what kind of job he's offering you, what you can, telling you willing to learn anything he's willing to teach you.

J: And my teacher say, because uh, it looks really good when after the interview, I send a thanks card for my inter(view,

NS: (That sounds

NS: That sounds a good idea, because then they will always remember you.

J: Because all the people in the company are really busy, they interview a lot of people, not only me, and like this when my thanks card, he remember me, and I'm infok (focus) more interest in my in the new position.

NS: You-you show interested in the job.

J: (In the job.

NS: Interested in learning more, and if you do that, you'll have a lot better chance to succeed and get the job, you don't want to tell your troubles, you'll want telling how I'm willing to learn and to help you, to build up your business.
137  J: That's (true.
138
139  NS: (And that's the way that they'll...
APPENDIX F

Natural Conversation 2

NS = Native Speaker (a secretary at workplace)
R = Rick (a non-native speaker)

1 NS: Hi Rene, how are you doing?
2 R: (. ) Just nothing. What are you doing?
3 NS: I'm doing my work. When I say "How are you doing?", I mean "How are you doing?"
4 R: Oh, I'm fine, and you?
5 NS: You're fine, good. I'm fine too.
6 R: Um(.). Are you busy?
7 NS: I'm very busy doing my work. What are you doing?
8 R: I'm listening to you.
9 NS: Listening to me. (laugh together) So, tell me what you did today?
10 R: Oh, a lot of staffs. Ab uh: (.3) you know, um: I start at six thirty in the morning a.m. to work.
11 NS: six thirty?
12 R: Six thr(ty).
13 NS: (Aha.
14 R: And to prepare my schedule for today and: I make a lot of activities as I-I reviewed: the production refer from inventory, that you need to enter the computer.
15 NS: Yes.
16 R: And to have uh an good 'ancuracy for the inventory to for the sales girls need that 'ancuracy to, to work.
NS: Do you mean "accuracy"?
R: Accuracy.
NS: Accuracy.
R: Alright.
NS: (Ok, got to me first thing in this morning.
Is it hot outside?
R: Yeah, the weather is too hot. Do you know uh(.
uh how, how the weather is?
NS: How the weather is?
R: Aha, how many grades?
NS: How, what degree?
R: Yeah.
NS: How high the temperature is?
R: Uh-(um.
NS: (Properly about 90 degrees.
R: 90 degrees.
NS: I don't know for sure, but that's what I guess.
R: Yeah, it's too hot.
NS: About 90 degrees, it's like: {
R: { At what time are you going uh:, uh: are you to leave?
NS: I'm going right now.
R: Uh (hh hh)
NS: You want to know where I'm going.
R: N:no.
NS: Ok.
R: (Hh) Where do you want to (go?)

NS: (I won't tell you.)

R: Tical...

NS: No.

R: At school?

NS: No I'm going to get a haircut.

R: Haircut. Again?

NS: Again,

R: Again. (Hh hh)

NS: Going to have a haircut.

R: Are you gonna, are you gonna (.), are you gonna to have haircut as a boy? (Hh)

NS: Stop it. You are very mean.

R: (Hh hh)

NS: You need to be nice to people.

R: (Hh hh) (. ) Aright, good look(hh), I decide you good look(hh).

NS: Thank you. You must be nice to me.

R: Ok.
APPENDIX G

Natural Conversation 3

NS = Native Speaker (a college student)
V = Vicky (a non-native speaker)

1 V: Now, I want to ask you something, is it ok?
2 NS: Yeah, that's fine.
3 V: Ok. Uh, the first question is "How old are you?"
4 NS: I'm gonna 20 years old in May.
5 V: Oh good, good: age (hh). I can remember when I
6 was 20 long time ago(hh). I was very happy, young
7 woman(hh). Maybe you too (hh).
8 NS: Yeah, I feel old.
9 V: Why?
10 NS: Because I'm 20.
11 V: (Hh) ok, Um um, maybe uh, maybe uh, do you like,
12 uh (.),uh (.). OK, anyway, what do you (.) Study
13 right now?
14 NS: Uh right now, I'm taking a business class and:
15 first aid: and English.
16 V: Good.
17 NS: Yeah, it's,it's, uh just general education class
18 to graduate.
19 V: Oh, ok. I am interested,uh to get to my GED. Uh:
20 what do you think I need (.)or get my GED, maybe,
21 I don't know(hh).
22 NS: Uh you need to study real hard, and past it, past
23 it and do your homework.
24 V: (Hh)
NS: Then you can get your GED. It's easy.

V: Ok, thank you, thank you. Um if you are my teacher (hh), I think I can do(hh). Ok um, how about your family?

NS: Oh I live with my parents. I have an older sister and: two younger brothers.

V: I know they.

NS: I know they?

V: Them, I know them.

V: Ok, Henna, do you-uh-like drive you car?

NS: Yes, I like to drive my car. Do you?

V: Uh: yes, I have, and: I sometimes I like drive, but uh: somedays is: uh very hard-hard-hard day with, when I am driving, uh: sometimes in the afternoon, I feel tired uh:

NS: Yes, what kind car do you have?

V: uh: (.) I have a van (.). 1986 (.). Dodge, color, Dodge mini van.

NS: What color is it?

V: (.3) What (.), it's blue.

NS: Ok, I have a van too, and it's brown. I don't know what year it is, but it's brown.

V: (Hh hh)

NS: (Hh hh)

V: Ok. Is-uh au au-to-ma-tic car?

NS: Yes.

V: Um (.). Uh: (.3) my van is-uh (.3) uh easy-easy to drive, uh: because it's uh au-to-matic too. When- When I learned to drive a car(.4), uh I learned with a (.6) au-to-matic?
88   NS: Stick.
89   V: Stick? Oh stick,
90   NS: Standard.
91   V: Oh standard car, I was one year with the: (.3)
92   NS: Automatic?
93   V: No.
94   NS: Permit?
95   V: (.Ok, I was one year with the permit, and: (.)
96     last day when the: (. the paper: expired, uh I
97     did: the (.6)
98   NS: Driver's test?
99   V: Yeah, yes. I did the driver's test, and the
100    secretary tell me, told me uh, oh that's the last
101     day. Yeah, you need to get the: appointment, the:
102     test today. I said yes. Can I? and she say, she
103     say yes, you can get by 11 o'clock. When the:
104     inspector, specter? um-uh,
105   NS: Instructor.
106   V: Instructor? UV:-um (. when the instructor came,
107     I I got (.uh little nervous, but when the: (.3)
108     test finish, I (.4) co-could get my (.5) driver
109     license. And I (. be happy. (hh ) No I was
110     happy.
111   NS: Is that automatic that yours?
112   V: N-un oh yes.
113   NS: (. How long ago?
114   V: (.5) Uh: by (. August, (.3) um (.6) next-next
115     August four years.
116   NS: Oh, you are longer than me. Have mine about three
117     years.
118   V: Did you uh (. did you get ticket? (hh  hh)
136 NS: Never, never. (hh hh)
137 V: (hh hh)
138 NS: And { you?
139 V: { Really?
140 NS: Yes. and you?
141 V: No, (hh hh). We are:- good:- drivers, drivers.
142 NS: Where am I going? Where have I been? Or where do
143 V: Where would you want to go?
144 NS: Ok.
145 V: Ok.
146 NS: Oh, I want to go to Europe and Australia.
147 V: Oh, wa (hh hh).
148 NS: And I like to travel, we've travelled all the
149 V: (.5) we too. Um- um (.3) in 19 (.3) 197:9, I was in
150 NS: Where would you want to go?
151 V: (.5)
152 NS: Where would you want to go?
153 V: I want to go (.3) uh to Alaska, (hh hh).
154 NS: Where have I been? Or where do
155 V: Alaska and: (.5) and um Alia, and; now I can't,
156 NS: Where would you want to go?
157 V: (.3) uh to Alaska, (hh hh).
158 NS: And I like to travel, we've travelled all the
159 V: (.5) I need to think for trip
160 NS: Where would you want to go?
161 V: (.3) uh to Alaska, (hh hh).
162 NS: And I like to travel, we've travelled all the
163 V: (.5) and um Alia, and; now I can't,
164 NS: Where would you want to go?
165 V: (.3) uh to Alaska, (hh hh).
166 NS: Where would you want to go?
NS: Ok, uh- Europe or China?

V: I like uh Egy-(.) Egypt.

NS: Egypt? You want to go to Egypt?

V: Yes.

NS: Ok.

V: (Hh hh)

NS: (Hh hh)
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