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Literary Text and the Development of Communicative Competence in Second Language Learning Towards an Interactive Approach to Text

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Abstract:
In recent decades, researchers have been striving to study second language learning strategies, focusing on their communicative dimension in order to develop appropriate teaching strategies and methods for foreign languages. After defining the concept of a second or foreign language and distinguishing it from a first language within the field of language teaching, we addressed the importance of communication in constructing meaning among interacting participants. We also identified the strategies adopted by these participants, particularly those used by native speakers and learners of a language as a second language. We presented researchers' classifications of these strategies into two main groups: those used by learners to evade or avoid continuing a conversation in the second language and those that help learners maintain and successfully complete communication in that language. Within these two groups, there are sub-strategies for compensating for deficiencies that arise during communication. We concluded that these strategies should be adopted in the teaching of foreign languages, including Arabic in our country.

Keywords: Communicative strategies, second language learning, interactive text, interpretation.

Introduction

Studying communicative strategies enables researchers to recognise the positive efforts learners make when acquiring a second language, ensuring the communication process runs smoothly in mixed-ability classrooms. Accordingly, teachers form groups within the classroom and provide activities that are appropriate to learners' preferred strategies and methods. This approach also makes teachers aware of their own methodology and encourages them to adapt it to learners' strategies to ensure success.

1. Definition of the Second Language

In the field of language didactics, a second or foreign language is a language that is treated as a linguistic subject, addressed through teaching and learning. It therefore contrasts with the first or mother tongue, which is acquired automatically during childhood.

A language is considered a foreign language by two categories of people: those who do not recognise it as their language of origin and those who do recognise it as their language of origin, but who wish to teach it to non-native speakers (CUQ J.-P., 2003: 43).

It is noteworthy that describing the languages an individual learns after acquiring their first language as second languages of different ranks is preferable to describing them as foreign languages. This is because, regardless of whether they are first or second languages, the languages an individual learns form part of their linguistic competence and cannot be considered foreign (Elimam, 2006: 21).

Second language teaching, on the other hand, constitutes a specialised field within language didactics. Unlike the teaching of other subjects, which have subject matter independent of their teaching methods (e.g. science), language teaching involves learning linguistic behaviours and the culture associated with them. Consequently, language teaching is distinguished from other subjects by its focus on the natural process of language acquisition. Language didactics is therefore the study of the conditions and specific patterns of language teaching and learning in a school environment. The teacher's role is to guide learners through the process of acquiring the language and its culture (Valenzuela V., 2010: 72).

The Arabic language is taught as a first language in Algeria. In reality, however, it is a second language for its speakers because it differs from their native language, colloquial Arabic or Darija, which they acquired naturally. Despite this, it appears very similar to Standard Arabic. Grammarians of the past observed this difference between Standard Arabic, which was transmitted across generations through acquisition rather than learning alone, and the colloquial forms of Arabic prevalent at that time. They referred to this phenomenon as laḥn (linguistic errors), leading them to develop teaching methods to address it. However, what is noteworthy is that these colloquial forms of Arabic spread, consequently causing Standard Arabic to cease being a language acquired naturally and used in everyday communication.

Therefore, even when teaching Arabic in our country, it seems necessary to benefit from the study of communicative strategies. Focusing on or limiting Arabic language instruction to memorisation and recall strategies does not produce learners characterised by creativity, originality and innovation.

Based on the foregoing, the following lines will discuss the communicative strategies used in second language learning. These strategies are based on the idea that communication is an interactive process, not merely the transmission of information from a sender to a receiver. In this process, relationships between individuals are regulated through various methods to achieve objectives, with each party relying on the other. Language is the means through which the speaker's intentions are realised in the addressee's reactions, and it facilitates the exchange and sharing of skills. This process requires considerable caution and alertness from the

participants, as well as a dual focus of attention to address the problem of mutual understanding.

The focus is on communication and its objectives, and on what the participants in the interaction wish to achieve together through this process.

A focus on formal problems that may arise during comprehension and production processes, where participants exercise particular caution, as evidenced by their gradual awareness aimed at ensuring the expected linguistic structure.

The learner's caution when using a second language is reflected in self-regulatory procedures (such as self-correction) and interactive regulatory procedures (such as reformulations and requests for clarification). These procedures help to coordinate the participants in order to construct meaning and are among the communicative strategies, as we shall see (Bange, 1996).

Before presenting the communicative strategies employed in second language learning, we will first address the definition of learning and its strategies, because learners need to be aware of the learning process in general and the various strategies from which they can benefit to ensure successful language acquisition.

2. Communicative Strategies in Learning

Learning is a cognitive process through which learners acquire knowledge and develop skills, qualifications and values. It enables them to construct representations of the reality in which they live that are consistent with their experience. It also helps learners to establish interactions between external data and their own awareness. Accordingly, the purpose of learning is not merely to acquire knowledge; rather, it is primarily to develop learners' behaviours and skills to improve their circumstances and solve problems at work and in other areas of life. Therefore, this process must be meaningful and significant; that is to say, it must take place within a network of things perceived and experienced by the learner, who follows specific strategies in doing so (Legendre, 2005: 88).

The term 'strategy' refers to 'a set of procedures and practices followed by the teacher in the classroom to achieve outcomes in light of the established objectives. It includes a set of methods, means, activities and assessment methods that help to achieve these objectives' (Shehata & Al-Najjar, 2003: 39). It is also defined as 'the art of using available resources and means in the most effective way to achieve the desired outcome' (Shehata & Al-Najjar, 2003: 39).

Learning strategies constitute the various processes used by learners to achieve their learning objectives, such as understanding meanings, using words, applying grammatical rules and mastering the various aspects of the language they are learning. When acquiring their first language, children apply strategies that are involuntary and unconscious. However, when learning a second language, the learner applies strategies consciously and deliberately.

Learners follow several types of strategy when learning a second language:

Cognitive strategies involve analysing the language and comparing the information encountered during second language learning with that already known in the first language.

Metacognitive strategies consist of the learner being aware of their learning process, formulating a plan for it and monitoring its progress.

Social strategies refer to the effort made by the learner to interact with fellow learners and manage the emotions associated with learning (Richards, J. C. & Schmidt, R., 2010: 331).

Communicative strategies focus on the communicative aspect of the learning process. In establishing the field of ethnography of communication, Hymes made the important observation that second language speakers who can produce grammatically correct sentences and possess linguistic competence will still need assistance. For Hymes, communicative competence includes adherence to the social conventions observed when using linguistic forms, in addition to the use of these forms. According to Saville-Troike (2006: 106), it is not sufficient for an individual to acquire linguistic knowledge of the second language in order to communicate with other individuals within the speech community; the individual also needs knowledge concerning language use in its social context, as recognised by the members of that community.

Therefore, learning a second language requires acquiring the various components of communicative competence. These components are:

The linguistic component: The ability to formulate and interpret grammatically correct sentences and combine words to create meaning as recognised by native speakers of the language.

Sociolinguistic component: The ability to select patterns of expression in that language according to environmental factors, the relationships between participants in an interaction and communication purposes.

Discourse component: The ability to use appropriate strategies when formulating and interpreting texts.

The sociocultural component: This component is necessary for the correct and appropriate use of the second language and enables learners to extend their communication beyond the boundaries of their speech community (Little D. et al., 1996: 12–13).

In their initial definition, Canale and Swain indicated that strategic competence enables individuals to compensate for communication breakdowns resulting from inadequate language use or insufficient knowledge of the language in question. This means that strategic competence enables individuals to access and employ communicative strategies to overcome linguistic (grammatical) or pragmatic (sociolinguistic) deficiencies. These strategies take the form of verbal procedures (explanatory sentences), which may occur simultaneously or asynchronously with learner behaviours that ensure the continuity of the interaction process (Little D. et al., 1996: 15).

According to Tarone, these communicative strategies are mutual efforts made by participants in an interaction to overcome misunderstandings, establish means of communication and maintain the smooth progress of verbal interactions. Knowledge of these strategies is particularly important for beginner second language learners who want to participate in conversational activities. These strategies enable interactions to continue when learners

encounter linguistic deficiencies. They also provide learners with considerable input and opportunities to cooperate with their interlocutor in constructing meaning (Saville-Troike, 2006: 178).

However, other researchers consider them to be cognitive processes undertaken by learners to address immediate communication difficulties. These processes manifest in the learners' spontaneous and unintentional actions during interaction, which aim to bridge the gap between the current communicative situation's requirements and their interlanguage resources. From this perspective, communicative strategies constitute the individual efforts adopted by learners to solve problems when communicating in a second language (Bange, 1992).

Notably, learners employ these strategies not only when producing utterances, but also when understanding and interpreting discourse produced by others. These strategies are manifested in compensatory phenomena that reflect the learner's direct intervention and reveal their psychosocial characteristics when generating and interpreting discourse (Tijani, 2006: 123).

3. Classification of communication strategies

Several studies have sought to identify various communication strategies, particularly in multilingual contexts. However, these strategies have been classified in different ways by different researchers.

Færch and Kasper's classification

These two researchers based their definition and classification of communication strategies among second language learners on psycholinguistic processes. According to Færch and Kasper (1980: 81), communication strategies are potentially conscious plans for addressing a problem encountered while attempting to achieve a communicative goal.

They demonstrated that learners engage in two processes to achieve their communicative goals, solve problems arising from the communication process or bridge the gap between their communicative needs and their linguistic repertoire: preparation and planning, followed by execution.

In the first stage, the learner decides on appropriate plans for addressing the problem and selects elements corresponding to the communicative context from their linguistic system. These are then organised for use in the second stage. In the second stage, which concerns execution, the learner proceeds with the intended action to solve the problem.

These researchers argue that learners overcome communication problems in two ways: either they continue the interaction until they achieve their goal (if successful), or they modify their goal using other linguistic means such as borrowing from their first language, using explanatory sentences or switching to another language (the avoidance or evasion strategy) (Tijani, 2006: 124–125).

The two researchers therefore classified communication strategies into three categories:

A. Formal reduction strategies: These are used when learners choose to communicate by relying on a limited set of rules or elements, avoiding the production of long or incorrect utterances due to their insufficient command of certain second language rules. During a specific

communicative situation, the learner avoids using the methods that a native speaker would use to achieve a particular goal, instead relying on a limited set of rules or elements. This reduction encompasses the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical aspects of the language (Færch & Kasper, 1980: 85).

These strategies, which involve reducing many grammatical rules, are regularly observed among Arabic learners, particularly with regard to grammatical inflection, derivation, sentence structures and ordering elements, and expressing time and place, as well as rules with no equivalent in their first language.

B. Functional reduction strategies: Learners resort to these strategies when they encounter a problem during the planning stage due to a lack of linguistic resources, during the execution stage (i.e. a compensation problem), or when they inhibit or avoid communication rather than completing the interaction. By adopting functional reduction strategies, learners abandon the achievement of their communicative goal in order to avoid encountering the problem. This reduction affects the components of the communicative goal: speech acts and speech content (Færch & Kasper, 1980: 90).

C. Achievement or completion strategies: These strategies emerge when learners attempt to solve a problem by expanding their communicative resources. These strategies include code-switching (borrowing vocabulary from their first language or another language), literal translation, generalisation, using synonymous sentences, creating new vocabulary, restructuring, and using non-linguistic strategies such as gestures and sound imitation (Tijani M. A., 2006: 126).

Despite the importance of these strategies in second language learning, Arabic language teachers often do not encourage learners to use expressions or words from their native language or any other language to ensure successful communication. Instead, teachers sometimes resort to verbal reprimands, which may hinder learners' progress.

Riley's classification

Riley divides communication strategies into two main groups: reduction strategies, and compensation or achievement strategies. The first group is the same as the previously mentioned classification of reduction strategies. The second group consists of learners' efforts to compensate for linguistic deficiencies, even if this leads to errors being made. This group is also divided into two categories:

A. Self-repair strategies: The learner uses methods to solve communication problems independently. The most prominent of these are:

- Code-switching: which occurs when learners incorporate words or expressions from their first language into their second language.

- Foreignising: This involves pronouncing second-language words or expressions in the same way as their equivalents in the first language are pronounced.

- Literal translation: Here, the speaker translates words from their first language literally into the second language.

- Word coinage: The learner invents new words by relying on their first language or their knowledge of the second language.

- Smurfing: This involves using general deictic words instead of the appropriate vocabulary because the learner does not know the corresponding words in the target language. The meaning of these general words is derived from the context. For example, in Algerian Darija, one might use the words “thing”, “something” or “animal” when one does not know the name of the referent.

- Approximation: This occurs when the learner uses a word or expression knowing it is inappropriate, but which the interlocutor can understand because its meaning is similar to that of the correct word or expression.

Paraphrasing occurs when learners express meaning through explanatory or defining phrases rather than using the specific term assigned to that meaning in the target language.

- Non-verbal communication: This includes imitation, gestures, facial expressions, noises and other non-verbal means, as well as exclamations and intonation.

- Collaborative strategies: These occur when learners seek the help of a more competent interlocutor to facilitate communication or solve communication problems. The known strategies are:

- Indicating foreign identity: This occurs when the learner informs others that they are a foreigner and/or that their command of the foreign language is weak.

- Appeals: The learner asks their interlocutor to speak more slowly, repeat what they have said, or explain it further. These appeals may sometimes be expressed through gestures.

- Requests for assistance: These involve asking for help with translating a word into the target language, correcting a word or finding the right word or expression.

- Confirmation: This involves ensuring mutual understanding by asking the interlocutor questions to verify their comprehension of the learner’s sentences (Riley, 1985: 106–108).

Giacomi and Heredia’s classification

These two researchers consider communication strategies to be sets of interactive procedures carried out by participants in an exchange. They distinguish between two types of strategies in a bilingual context:

- Preventive strategies: These are a set of principles that regulate communication. They influence the communication process by enabling both parties to anticipate communication problems and manage their exchanges accordingly. They include the following:

- Facilitation strategies or ‘foreigner talk’: The native speaker simplifies their vocabulary to make it easier for the learner to understand. They may omit certain sentence elements, speak slowly and carefully, or demonstrate attentive listening through verbal cues or gestures.

- Strategies for avoiding failure in the communication process (principle of et caetera): In their desire to maintain the flow of the conversation, learners may agree with their native-speaking interlocutor even when they have not fully understood the conversation.

- Self-Corrections: These strategies involve one of the participants intervening to correct or reformulate their own speech before the other participant takes the floor. These strategies have a dual advantage, as they anticipate communication breakdowns and maintain the continuity of the topic. To correct an error independently (auto-réparation), the learner searches for the appropriate word or rephrases the sentence. This activity may occur spontaneously or deliberately during the interaction.

- Management strategies: These are a set of procedures used by the speaker to try to solve a communication problem that threatens the continuity of the discourse. They appear after the discourse because they refer to what has already been said. They include:

- Negotiation and clarification issues: These are manifested in checking whether understanding has been achieved, as well as in attempts at explanation and clarification. Participants deviate from the normal course of communication to focus on metalinguistic activity as they seek explanations and verify understanding. One participant may request clarification verbally or through gestures due to a lack of understanding or misunderstanding. The other participant then highlights the form and meaning of the words or expressions used in that context so that the interaction can continue as normal.

- Reformulation: This is a communicative practice that involves expressing ideas clearly without trying to persuade the listener or speak excessively. It resembles assertive behaviour. It is widely used in education at all levels, where teachers formulate and reformulate their discourse in different ways according to what they consider appropriate for facilitating mutual understanding among learners, thereby conveying linguistic knowledge effectively.

- Definition (Définition): Due to linguistic asymmetry and cultural differences, the two interlocutors — the native speaker and the foreign learner — usually define the content of the conversation in order to resolve any misunderstandings that may arise (Giacomi A. and De Heredia Chr., 1986: 15–23).

Bange's classification

According to this researcher, communication strategies are limited to attempts to solve problems encountered during interaction in order to construct meaning, due to a mismatch between the communicative situation's requirements and the learner's proficiency in the target language. Building on the work of his predecessors, this researcher divided communication strategies into three major groups: strategies for abandoning communication goals (abandonment), strategies for achieving communication goals (realisation), and a further category of substitution strategies (substitution).

The first type occurs when learners try to avoid communication problems by omitting or reducing information. In contrast, the second type is manifested in the learner's efforts to manage communication problems and pursue their goals. This type involves accepting potential risks and seeking assistance from native speakers. The final type involves learners attempting to compensate for their deficiencies by resorting to their first language or using gestures. These strategies occupy an intermediate position between the first two types, leaning towards either one in order to continue or interrupt communication.

In the researcher's view, these strategies are complex and extend along a continuum from the least preferred by the speaker of the first language to the most preferred, and from the least to the greatest creativity in the cognitive activities of the second-language learner (Bange, 1992).

Conclusion:

We are now fully aware that studying the communication strategies of second-language learners requires us to reconsider foreign-language teaching strategies. This means moving beyond those based on memorising grammatical rules and vocabulary lists, and encouraging learners to speak the second language as though it were their first. Instead, we must adopt the communication strategies of the various types discussed above. These strategies focus on the interactive dimension, encouraging learners to exchange ideas and communicate their intentions.

The aim is to provide appropriate instruction that improves learning conditions, produces better results in developing learners' competencies and achieves the desired objectives. It is also important to note that these strategies can be employed in the teaching of Arabic in Algeria, whether for speakers of Darija and colloquial Arabic or for speakers of the various Amazigh varieties.

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