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TOWARDS A MODEL OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed an increasing interest in the area of learner strategies. Theory and research in second/foreign language learning strongly suggest that language learners adopt a variety of strategies in order to acquire a better command of the target language or use the target language most effectively. In the seventies a number of "good language learner studies" were conducted (e.g. Rubin 1975, Stern 1975), which aimed at distinguishing factors contributing to success in second/foreign language learning. The studies initiated research on what came to be known as **learner strategies**. At first the strategies were only described within a framework of the learner's interlanguage, thus, they were believed to be employed exclusively by language learners. However, there can be a number of situations in which native speakers adopt strategies in the comprehension of different messages, or when faced with problems in communication. Therefore, researchers tried to address such issues as: What is a strategy? How can one determine when language use is strategic? How to delimit the context for a strategy in language use? How and why do language users employ strategies? What influences strategy use and choice? These questions have dominated the research on learner strategies resulting in a constant flow of publications on learner strategies and various explanations suggested for this phenome-

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non. However, the studies which have been conducted so far have not exhausted the area of investigation and, thus, encourage further research.

In the present paper, an attempt is made to shed some new light on the problem of communication in a language that has not been developed, and relate the concept of communication strategies to the Polish context.

Taking into account what has been achieved so far on the issue of communication strategies, it attempts to investigate the notion of communication strategies employed by Polish advanced learners of English when they encounter lexical problems. The theoretical framework that has been built for many years has been applied to a practical analysis of students' performance. The primary aim of the study was answering the following questions: which lexical communication strategies do advanced learners of English adopt? How can the strategies be organized in a taxonomy? What factors influence strategy use and choice? How can the strategies be taught, thus, how can the teacher contribute to improving language learners' communicative competence?

The intended direction of the paper is to start with establishing the context in which a strategy is used, and set definitional criteria for a communication strategy. The latter is crucial for further analysis of communication strategies, since by means of the criteria it may be differentiated between strategies and other communication processes. The identification and taxonomic categorization of communication strategies used by advanced learners of English will be briefly presented and followed by a model of communication strategy training.

1. Identification of strategic behavior in communication

It is unequivocal that any description of strategy use must begin with the identification of strategic behavior. On what basis can we differentiate between strategic and nonstrategic behavior? In what situations can we speak about strategy use? One might say that adopting any solution to a problem involves the use of a strategy. Hence, it seems that a strategy is similar to a problem-solving activity. However, some problems may be solved by means of strategy while others may be dealt with in a more conventional way. Bialystok (1990: 7) gives the following example of a task which is approached strategically by one pupil and nonstrategically by another:

A 7-year-old child is sitting in an arithmetic class, tormented by the possibility that she may be called upon to solve an addition problem. Inevitably, her turn arrives.

How to calculate the required sum? A quiet surreptitious check of her concealed fingers delivers the correct solution. Next, her friend is asked a similar problem. Quickly, the solution is recited from a memorized set.

The use of a "finger method" in counting is an example of strategy use, while the use of retreat is not strategic. Therefore, it seems necessary to set out conditions that make a problem strategy-based, i.e. the one which can be solved strategically. However, as it was shown in the example of dealing with arithmetic problems, the strategy use also depends on a learner, since the problem may be approached differently by various learners. Summing up, the use of a strategy is determined both by *the type of a problem* and *the type of solution* adopted by learners. However, there is little consensus on a finite set of characteristics of the types of problems and strategic solutions. Strategic behavior employed by advanced learners of English has been described as *deliberate, goal-/performance-oriented, task-specific* as well as *systematic and potentially conscious*.

Tarone (1980) states that a communication strategy is "a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situation where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared", and that communication strategies are "attempts to bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the second-language learner, and the linguistic knowledge of the target language interlocutor in real communication situations" (1983: 65).

Hence, the difference in the interlocutors' command of a language necessitates a negotiation of the meaning and involves cooperation, since both interlocutors perceive a communication problem which they try to overcome. Therefore, a communication strategy used by the learner may be identified directly in performance since the communication problem or the adopted solution to overcome it is believed to surface in the performance.

The broader definition of communication strategies was put forward by Faerch and Kasper (1983: 36), who perceived communication strategies as "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicate goal". Hence, it may be assumed that cooperation is not an obligatory criterion of communication strategies, but it depends on the learner who may employ strategies, but need not overcome a communication problem on a cooperative basis.

However, analyzing Faerch and Kasper's definition of communication strategies, it can be seen that there are two important criteria for defining communication strategies: the communication strategies are "**potentially conscious**" and are adopted to solve **a problem**. Let us first analyse the latter of the two criteria, namely *problematicity*. While attempting at her first definition of strategic behaviour in communication, Tarone (1980: 195) states that communication strat-

egies are “used by an individual to overcome **the crisis** which occurs when language structures are inadequate to convey the individual’s thought”. Also Poulisse (1987: 72) defines communication strategies as “strategies which a language user employs in order to achieve his intended meaning on becoming aware of **problems** arising during the planning phase of an utterance due to his own linguistic shortcomings”. Therefore, problematicity becomes definitional to the notion of communication strategies. Communication strategies are assumed to be used only when there is a problem which may impede communication. *Consciousness*, however, has some restricting implications, since it makes strategy use possible only to speakers who are capable of conscious reflection (Bialystok 1990: 4). Therefore, using consciousness as a criterion would exclude children as they are unable to monitor their cognitive processes consciously. Furthermore, consciousness may vary depending on the occasion when a particular technique or strategy may or may not be conscious (see also Faerch and Kasper 1983).

Strategic behavior has been described as a central issue in problem-solving. A learner may choose a strategy and the choice is based on the learner’s *knowledge and the type of a problem*. Therefore, choosing a strategy by the learner is the most basic and important quality of problem-solving. It is a part of the learner’s knowledge, and, hence, it may be influenced by *a learning/communication task* (e.g. recall, problem-solving, recognition), *learning activities* (i.e. attention, elaboration and/or rehearsal), *characteristics of a learner* (i.e. his/her linguistic knowledge, skills, attitude, mood), nature of materials used.

2. Communication strategy training – the practical application of the studies of communication strategies

Faerch and Kasper (1983: 53) state that “... by learning how to use communication strategies appropriately, learners will be more able to bridge the gap between pedagogic and non-pedagogic communicative situations”.

Thus, the effective use of communication strategies helps language learners overcome the gap between formal and informal learning situations. The most important impediments to the process of language learning and communication are: 1) limited context in which foreign language learning takes place (mainly the classroom), 2) limited exposure to the target language, both due to the context and the number of hours devoted to learning, 3) the teacher, whether he/she is a native speaker of the target language or whether he/she shares his/

her native language with the students. What is more, interference from the student's first language may hinder the acquisition, since language learners tend to build new rules concerning the target language which are based on previously acquired knowledge. Some researchers (Raupach 1983, Tarone 1980) identified two types of language learners, namely: street learners and classroom learners. Street learners are those learners who have acquired the second language in the second language environment (e.g. L2 learners in immersion programmes in Canada and the United States). Street-learners are perceived as **skilful strategy** users. Classroom-learners, on the other hand, are those learners who have learned the foreign language in the classroom situation, often with the teacher who shares the mother tongue with his students. They tend to adopt only the limited set of strategies. Therefore, teaching communication strategies seems to be unavoidable. There are two approaches to teaching communication strategies, which differ in the way they perceive and deal with the communicative problem (see also Kasper and Kellerman 1997):

1. *the strong view of instruction (informed training)*, when the teacher instructs language learners how to overcome communication problems they encounter;
2. *the moderate view of instruction (blind training)*, when the teacher only makes language learners conscious of the fact that communicative problems can be overcome by employing some problem-solving devices. However, the teacher does not train language learners in using the devices.

The strong view of instructions encourages extending the taxonomies of communication strategies so that they account for all possible communicative behavior. Language learners should learn the list of communication strategies and develop the ability of employing them in various contexts. The teacher's task is to make learners aware of different communicative goals and of the effectiveness of particular strategies. Therefore, at the threshold of communicative strategy development, teachers must discover what strategies should be taught.

3. The empirical study of communication strategies used by Polish students of English

The present paper focuses mainly on communication strategies which may be referred to as **lexical communication strategies**, i.e. the communication strategies employed by language learners to overcome lexical problems. How-

ever, some lexical communication strategies may only be observed in the lexical domain, whereas others can occur in the semantic, pragmatic or syntactic domains (e.g. approximation or paraphrase).

The definitional criteria used for distinguishing communication strategies from other processes in speech production were: *problematicity* and *potential consciousness* since the same technique may be called strategic or nonstrategic, depending on the context. Let us analyze the following situations:

Situation 1:

Speaker A (a target language learner) is engaged in a conversation with Speaker B (a native speaker of the target language). Suddenly Speaker A encounters a gap in his lexical knowledge. Consequently Speaker A resorts to different methods of overcoming the problem (e.g. describes the troublemaking word). Then the description may be called a strategy, since there was a problem which impeded communicating the meaning.

Situation 2:

Speaker A (a target language learner) is engaged in a conversation with Speaker B (a native speaker of the target language). Speaker A has no difficulty in communicating the meaning to the native speaker but to ensure that he has been clearly understood, Speaker A describes the key words. Then the description cannot be referred to as a strategy, since there was no problem encountered by Speaker A.

Furthermore, while investigating the interactional aspect of communication, lexical communication strategies have been identified in performance and their cooperative nature was emphasized.

Therefore, lexical communication strategies may be defined as a variety of techniques adopted by interlocutors when encountering lexical problems which may be based on lexical, semantic, pragmatic or syntactic knowledge. The strategies may be employed consciously or unconsciously in order to get the message across and require a negotiation of meaning. Furthermore, to be qualified as a lexical communication strategy, a strategy has to be characterized as:

1. a short-term solution to a communication problem rather than a long-term solution. If a given strategy becomes a long-term solution then the difference between the communication strategy and a learning strategy is blurred.
2. accessible to observation and investigation.
3. unconscious or conscious, since consciousness may be influenced by teaching.

4. dependent on a variety of identifiable factors, such as: *context-dependence, task-relatedness, the learner's level of language proficiency, etc.*

The study focuses on the investigation of lexical communication strategies employed by Polish students of English at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (the subject will also be called: students at the School of English) when they encounter lexical problems in communication. The author's aim is to analyze both an interactional and noninteractional context in which lexical communication strategies are believed to occur. The interactional context will be of two types:

1. the interactional context of a Polish student of English who engages in a conversation with a native speaker of English;
1. the interactional context of a Polish Student of English who engages in a conversation with a Polish university teacher of English.

Hence, the influence of a teacher of English who is a native speaker of the target language and a Polish teacher of English on the strategy use and choice will be further examined.

The noninteractional context is analyzed during an observation of the students coping with interpreting tasks. Therefore, the study examines how language learners deal with *real-life communication situations*, how they engage in more *teacher-controlled situations* (class sessions), and what techniques students use when they are devoid of immediate feedback (the case of *interpreting tasks*). Although there were no formal measures of effectiveness, some judgements concerning effectiveness were made by different teachers of English.

Since solving a problem in communication involves both coping with the problem by expanding the learner's communicative resources or by avoiding the problem, the author's interest is both in achievement and reduction strategies.

3.1. Subjects of the study

The subjects of the present study consisted of two groups: teachers of English and Polish students at the School of English.

a) **Teachers**

A group of university teachers, 7 native speakers of English and 8 Polish teachers of English, participated in the study, since it is strongly believed that teachers and their teaching methods influence strategy use and choice. The native speakers were British (3), American (3), and Irish (1). Some of them have been working at the School of English for several years, some have arrived in Poland recently. The Polish teachers

of English who took part in the study have been working at the university for several years and have been mainly senior lectures (2) and Ph. D students (6). The teachers were in their late twenties, thirties, or forties, and they all were highly-qualified teachers, willing to participate in the study, and make a contribution to improving language education in Poland. Furthermore, they revealed a good command of learner strategy theory and used it in their teaching.

b) **Students**

59 Polish students of English as a foreign language were asked to participate in the study. The students came from four different groups at School of English at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. There were two groups of first year students who were observed during their Practical English classes (General English), and two groups of third year students, one of which followed the regular course, and the other attended the Conference Interpreting Seminar (Translation Seminar). There were mainly female students in the four groups. The average age was 20 – 24. English was the only faculty they attended, thus, they tended to make most of their studies and associated their future career with English.

The primary aim of this study was to examine the strategies used by the students, and to elicit factors influencing strategy choice and use typical of students of English. The author wanted to see whether there are some differences in communication strategies used by advanced students and if the strategies which have been investigated for years by different researchers (who focused mainly on adolescents and children) are governed by some identifiable factors, such as the level of language proficiency, the learner's mother tongue, teaching methods, elicitation tasks, etc.

Although, the subjects of the present study were all university students at the same department (the School of English), they varied in their motivation and career choice. This enabled the author to test how motivation and career choice influence strategy use.

3.2. Data collection and the data collection instruments

The data collection took place during General English university course which is an integrated skills course, whose main objective is the overall development of students' language proficiency. The course combines all four language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, in the third year of

the course, the focus of class conversations is shifted from fluency to accuracy, yet continuing to take communicative effectiveness into account. Furthermore, the subjects were also observed in more real-life communication situations, such as social talks during breaks.

The data elicitation method consisted of a variety of tasks, such as *conversations* with the teachers on specific topics (structured/unstructured interviews), students leading the ensuing *discussion*, independent of the instructor's prompting, *picture description* and *reconstruction*, etc. The activities used at the Conference Interpreting Seminar differed from the ones used in General English classes. These were, for example *sight translation*, *memory training exercises* (e.g. opening and closing addresses where students are to repeat, paraphrase, or summarize what they have heard), *memory expansion exercises* (such as retelling stories, narratives in English and in Polish), and *liaison interpreting* with or without notes, especially interpreting of dialogues, interviews, opening/closing addresses, and presentations.

The target items, i.e. the items needed to be conveyed during the tasks, were not designated in advance. The students discussed some suggested topics (e.g. crime and the penal system, science, media, history, etc.) and then the students' language of communication was analyzed.

The main data collection instruments comprise: **observation**, **audiorecording**, and **videorecording** of approximately 150 hours of class sessions. The data collection instruments assessed mainly vocabulary used in communication, since the study focuses on strategies learners adopt when confronted with lexical problems. The data was collected in the classroom, during class sessions, and during breaks. The students were asked to complete a **questionnaire** consisting of two parts. Part A concerned the subjects' language background, whereas answering the questions in Part B required a specific knowledge of learner strategies. The teachers in the study were also asked to fill in a **questionnaire**, similar in structure to students' questionnaires. Part A of the teachers' questionnaire concerned their teaching experience and methods they use while conducting their classes, etc. Part B checked the teachers' knowledge of learner strategies. The aim of this part was to find out whether the teachers are aware of the existence of strategies, whether they encourage students to use language learner strategies, and which techniques they teach students to help them overcome lexical problems. This was designed to check whether the students employ communication strategies consciously or unconsciously. There have appeared some ambiguities attributed to consciousness as a defining criterion of communication strategies. **Nine** per cent of the subjects in the present study did not know anything about learner strategies but they still employed lexical communication strategies during conversations or discussions. Therefore, this supports the hy-

pothesis that some communication strategies become an unconscious event in speech production.

3.3. Lexical communication strategies adopted by students at the School of English at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

When faced with a lexical gap in interpersonal communication, the students employed various lexical communication strategies, such as: **approximation, circumlocution, language switch, word coinage, foreignizing, literal lexical transfer, and brandnaming**. Moreover, **avoidance** and some **nonlinguistic strategies** could also be observed. The lexical communication strategies adopted by the advanced learners may be easily divided into three categories, taking into consideration *the resources* the language learners drew on to overcome their communication break-downs. The resources comprise:

1. the students' native language (Polish),
2. the target language (English),
3. non-linguistic techniques, such as gestures, facial expressions, etc.

Therefore, the categories of communication strategies are referred to as: L1-based (strategies based on the Polish language), L2-based (strategies based on the English language), and non-linguistic strategies.

3.3.1. L1-based strategies

Literal lexical transfer

Most language learners tend to adopt *the equivalence hypothesis* in foreign language learning. The equivalence hypothesis means that foreign language learners resort to *word-for-word translation* believing that for every word in their native language there is a literal equivalent in the target language. Such a technique is typical of elementary language learners rather than advanced ones, since the more proficient a learner becomes in the target language, the more frequently he/she tries to abandon the equivalence hypothesis. However, the strategy of literal lexical transfer has been also used by the students at the School of English, who are thought to be advanced learners of English. After analyzing four groups of students, it turned out that the strategy of literal lexical transfer was most frequently used among L1-based strategy by the first-year students of English rather than the third-year students. Therefore, it may be assumed that the first-year students still resort to "thinking in their mother tongue" which leads to word-for-word translation, whereas more advanced students, try thinking in the tar-

get language, thus rejecting the equivalence hypothesis. The literal lexical transfer can be observed in the learners' use of the target language (L2) lexicon and structure to create a literal translation of L1 words or phrases. This strategy may also occur in reference to the connotations and collocations of a certain word, register-restrictions of a word, and, finally, to its conceptual or referential meaning. Hence, the strategy of literal lexical transfer may be observed in the use of Polish structures, word order, translating Polish idioms and applying Polish collocations to English words.

The table below presents some examples of literal lexical transfer used by the students of the School of English.

Table 1: Some examples of literal lexical transfer used by Polish students of English.

English utterance	Meaning	Polish equivalent
<i>I magazine papers</i>	Collect	zbierać, magazynować
Many <i>normal</i> people live here.	Ordinary	normalni, zwykli
<i>free</i> rooms	Vacant	Wolny
<i>deadly</i> boring	very boring	śmiertelnie nudny
a modern <i>style of life</i>	Lifestyle	styl życia
I welcome <i>all gathered here</i>	I welcome you all	Witam wszystkich tu zebranych
Your mother is <i>on the rent</i>	Retired	na rencie
For dinner I like <i>sth. which is concrete</i>	not sweets	coś konkretnego
<i>Natural increase</i>	birth rate	przyrost naturalny
My husband <i>had an alcoholic problem</i>	abused alcohol	miał problem alkoholowy
He was a <i>many-years</i> president of the company	long-term	Wieloletni
<i>solid</i> knowledge	deep, thorough	solidna wiedza
<i>Summer</i> cinema	open-air cinema	kino letnie
He works in <i>magistrate</i>	municipal office	Magistrat

Language switch

The author differentiates between the strategy of *literal lexical transfer*, which requires word-for-word translation of mother tongue lexicon, structure, collocations or connotations, etc. and *the strategy of language switch*, which requires no translation at all. The learner who adopts the strategy of language switch borrows a vocabulary item from his mother tongue and inserts it into the utterance in the target language, without any phonological or morphological adjustment. Consequently, one may observe such utterances as:

1. He's been working as a ... *kustosz*. /a custodian/
2. There was a ... *przełom* /a breakthrough/ in dietary science

Although the borrowing of a term from the learner's native language is prevailing in the strategy of language switch, some borrowings of lexical items from languages other than the learner's mother tongue or the target language may be observed.

For example:

"Most of the buildings here were decorated according to the ... *neoclassico* style",
(L3-Italian, English * neoclassical).

Foreignizing

Another occurrence of transfer may be observed in the communication strategy of foreignizing. The strategy occurs when the language learner applies the target language morphology or phonology to a lexical item from his mother tongue.

For example:

<i>informatics</i>	/computer science/
<i>touristics</i>	/tourism/
<i>controversive</i>	/controversial/
<i>sponsorize</i>	/support/
<i>ananas</i> [ənænəs]	/pineapple/
<i>substantions</i>	/substances/
<i>studium</i>	/training college/

However, using the strategy of foreignizing the language learner often creates non-existent, or contextually inappropriate words. That is why, the strategy is likely to hinder interpersonal communication and is considered an ineffective communication strategy.

3.3.2. L2-based strategies

Circumlocution

The language learner may employ the strategy of circumlocution when he/she decides to define a given word by describing its main features or characteristics. There are two broad types of circumlocution which may be observed while analyzing the target language learners' utterances, namely: **context-free circumlocution** and **context-dependent circumlocution**. Context-free circumlocution occurs mainly when language learners are asked to provide explanations of certain words, especially in a variety of tasks offered by the teacher (e.g. picture description, crossword, etc.). This type of circumlocution tends

to be more detailed, since the language learner attempts to pass on to his/her interlocutor all the semantic features of the word in question. Context-free circumlocution may also be found in dictionaries, etc. Context-dependent circumlocution may be observed in more "real-life" situations, such as for example: informal conversations, discussions, etc. Then, language learners choose which of the semantic features of a certain word they should use, i.e. which is crucial in order to communicate. The type of circumlocution, context-dependent circumlocution, is close to paraphrase, which is considered a main tool of lexical simplification, since paraphrase does not have to convey all the semantic features required by a certain context, therefore it is likely to simplify a description.

The strategy of circumlocution is the most frequently used communication strategy among L2-based strategies. It may vary from very accurate utterances to less accurate ones depending on semantic features incorporated in circumlocution. The language learners tend to focus on four types of features of an object they describe, that is:

1. **physical features of an object the learner is to describe.**

For example:

a) by means of color e.g. *"It's white and ..."*

b) by means of size or shape e.g. *"It's big and round ..."*

2. **functional features of an object**

For example: *"It's something for sweeping the floor"* /broom/

3. **locational features of an object**

For example: *"You can always find it in a pencil case"* /an eraser/

4. **specific features of an object**

For example: *"You may only have it ..."*

In interpersonal communication situations language learners usually tend to combine these four types of descriptions.

For example:

1. *"It's round and it has a handle and water inside"* /bucket/ – physical features and specific features;
2. *a piece of material used to wash up* /dishcloth/ – physical feature and functional feature;
3. *"he became red in face"* /meaning: blush/ – physical features and locational features;

Circumlocution turned out to be the most frequently used communication strategy. It tends to accompany other strategies, such as for example, approximation.

Approximation

The strategy of approximation occurs when language learners use single lexical items which share certain semantic features with the desired target items. The learners tend to provide an appropriate translation of the target item by referring to a similar, known item.

For example:

low <i>culture</i> of drivers	/meaning: etiquette/
<i>became smaller</i>	/meaning: diminish/
<i>careless</i> driver	/meaning: reckless/
<i>bad</i> roads	/meaning: poor quality/
<i>arrogant</i>	/meaning: aloof/

It has been observed that although the students participating in the study were familiar with the desired target items, nevertheless they still used to approximate these items. The reasons for approximating a known word or phrase may be as follows:

1. The students may have resorted to the use of approximation since the target item existed in the area of *passive vocabulary*;
2. The students were not sure of possible *collocations* or *connotations* the target word may appear;
3. The students did not know the target item's *conceptual* or *referential meaning*;
4. The students were not sure of *the context* in which the target item may appear;
5. The students wanted to *improve comprehension* by referring to a known item, of which collocations, connotations, referential and conceptual meaning the students were familiar with.

On the whole, the strategy of approximation generally leads to understanding the message, thus is perceived successful and acceptable as far as communication is concerned. However, in some cases when deviant collocations are created by the interlocutor (e.g. *a long-term plant* was used to mean "a perennial bush") the strategy results in unacceptable use of synonyms, approximating words, etc., and many lead to complete obscurity.

Brandnaming

The strategy of brandnaming occurs when language learners use subordinate terms instead of a superordinate one when confronted with a gap in vocabulary. The learners often use "brandnames" when they cannot come up with a single lexical item.

For example:

1. Do you have a *Kleenex* ? / meaning: a tissue/

2. When our mothers had babies, there were no *pamperses*. /meaning: diapers/
3. In the picture you can see *mountains like the Himalayas* /meaning: snow-capped mountains/.

The strategy of brandnaming may be found both effective and ineffective. It is believed to facilitate communication when interlocutors share knowledge about some products, firms, or brandnames. However, when they lack in necessary knowledge, the use of brandnaming causes a breach in communication.

Word coinage

The strategy of word coinage involves the creation of words by selecting a conceptual feature of the target item and incorporating it into the L2 morphology.

For example:

<i>a drugger</i>	/meaning: an addict, a drug abuser/
<i>a drunker</i>	/meaning: a drunkard/
<i>TV commercialism</i>	/meaning: TV commercials/
<i>a washing-machine</i>	/meaning: a dishwasher/
<i>an urbanistic system</i>	/meaning: town system/

As it can be seen from the examples, language learners often coin non-existent, or contextually inappropriate words, which may lead to misunderstanding.

Avoidance

The strategy of avoidance is placed among other L2-based strategies since it is believed that avoidance occurs when the advanced language learner knows what he/she avoids. The learner knows the word, or structure in question and only then he or she decides to avoid it. This genuine avoidance rather than mere lack of linguistic knowledge is used mainly by advanced learners of the target language, by teachers of English, etc. The strategy of avoidance may be observed when language learners avoid using specific lexical items by changing the topic of conversation or they do not take part in discussions when they feel they have only passive knowledge of necessary lexical items.

There are four main reasons for employing the strategy of avoidance, namely: phonological, morphological, syntactic and equivalence reasons. Thus, the learners choose lexical items whose pronunciation they find easier or whose syntactic structure they are familiar with. They tend to select more regular forms of verbs, adjectives, adverbs and the items which have an equivalent in their mother tongue.

Therefore, while adopting a strategy of avoidance the language learner has the choice of two or more words, expressions, structures, more or less accepta-

ble in a given context, and hence it is the learner who decides to avoid a certain lexical item.

Generalization

The communication strategy of generalization occurs when the learner who attempts to make a “generalization” of certain lexical items maintains his or her original communicative goal and tries to convey an intended meaning. For example:

1. ... wheat, oats, *and other types of corn are grown there...* /source: barley, rye/.
2. ...she attended a *vocational school...* /source: a vocational post secondary school/
3. *waters rich in minerals* / Polish source: wody bromowo-jodowe/

The student makes a generalization of the target items “barley and rye” by stating “and other types of corn”, thus he or she does not communicate precisely the concept but the context allows the interlocutor to realize the common semantic elements of the lexical items and the desired lexical item.

3.3.3. Non-linguistic strategies

Co-operative strategies

This strategy occurs when a speaker seeks co-operation from some authority (a teacher, a dictionary, peers). Co-operative strategies are used both in production and reception of a language. There are four main types of co-operative strategies:

1. **A language learner asks his/her teacher or other students for a given lexical item.**
For example:
What’s ... in English?
What do you say in English for ... ?
2. **A language learner looks up a word in a dictionary, encyclopedia or other book of reference.**
3. **A language learner asks for clarification.**
For example: T: “... and prepare crumpled sheet of paper”
S1: “what paper?”
T: “crumpled”
S1: “What?”
T: (takes a sheet of paper and crumples it and then shows it to the student) “crumpled sheet of paper”.
4. **A language learner waits for the right clue.**

When a learner encounters lexical problems, he or she may ask directly for help or he or she may wait for the right clue from his or her peers or teachers, not looking for assistance in a direct way.

For example: S: "... and then I ... I ... er ..."

T: "understood?"

S: "No, I ... I ..."

T: "found out?"

S: "Yes, I found out that ..."

Paralinguistic strategies

Language learners use gestures and/or facial expressions to replace speech when confronted with a gap in vocabulary.

3.3.4. Embedded strategies

While analyzing lexical communication strategies it has been observed that the strategy of circumlocution is the most frequently employed communication strategy. Therefore, the strategy may be called **the main communication strategy**. The strategy of circumlocution may occur as a distinct communication strategy, but may also be adopted in a variety of combinations. For example, the most frequent combination of communication strategies was circumlocution and approximation. For example:

It's a machine used for washing-up or It's a chair you can find in a kitchen.

Furthermore, there can be some combinations of L1-based strategies and circumlocution occurring in the learner's interlanguage.

For example:

1. "He studies informatics, you know, the knowledge of computers"
/L1-based foreignizing + circumlocution/
2. "He's been working as a ... kustosz, so he looks after a museum"
/L1-based language switch + circumlocution/

The combination of L1-based strategies and circumlocution is called *embeddedness* (see also Bialystok 1990), thus those L1-based strategies occurring within circumlocution are regarded as "embedded" strategies and require a separate category.

The taxonomy developed in the present study has been conceptually reorganized and suggests some modifications. It is also suggested that some lexical communication strategies based on the target language possess greater communicative

potential than others. Therefore, selected factors which influence strategy use and choice will be examined in the following section in order to trace down the factors which contribute to the success in reaching a communicative goal most effectively.

3.4. Factors influencing the use of communication strategies

In addition to identifying and classifying lexical communication strategies, the present paper also aims at identifying factors which influence the strategy choice and use, both external and internal factors. The external factors were exemplified by **task-relatedness**, the **nature of a communicative situation**, **teachers** and their **teaching methods**. The internal factors identified in the study may be directly linked to students' level of **target language proficiency**, the **influence of students' native language**, their **motivation** and **career choice**, and their **language ego**, thus, internal factors may also be of *linguistic, psychological* and *sociological nature*.

3.4.1. *External factors and their influence on the selection of communication strategies*

The nature of the task and features of the communicative situation

Interpersonal communication consists of a variety of genres of discourse, various rhetorical tasks. For example: the elicitation tasks included *picture reconstruction, picture description, translation, sentence completion, interview, conversation, narration* and *word transmission*.

The communicative tasks may differ in many respects, **task demands, context, time constraints, and the presence of an interlocutor** being the most important ones.

Task demands are the highest in picture reconstruction and storytelling activities. In order to complete the tasks, the subjects had to overcome gaps in vocabulary, therefore it was assumed they would use communication strategies. The tasks also had the highest level of informativeness and they enabled the analyst to differentiate between communication strategies used by the students. The tasks also differed in providing contextual information. However, being engaged in structured and unstructured interviews involved some kind of time constraints since the subjects had to obey conversational rules. According to Beattie (1980), pauses which last more than 5-6 seconds may result in losing the speaker's turn. Therefore, one could observe some kind of "fillers" in the conversation, when the speaker was hesitating or selecting a strategy. The fourth factor, namely the presence of an inter-

locutor, proved to have the greatest influence on strategy choice. Firstly, while conducting interviews, cooperative strategies appeared. Secondly, the students could confirm effectiveness and success of a particular strategy, since they were provided with immediate feedback from their interlocutors. Finally, more examples of avoidance, especially topic avoidance or message abandonment were observed.

The data gathered indicate that the task-related factor is more influential in the selection of strategies than the proficiency level factor. Another external factor which influences the choice of communication strategies is characterized by *features of communicative situation*. Language learners when faced with threatening situations e.g. public speaking, employed different communication strategies than during informal conversations. While participating in class sessions the students were aware of the fact that their performance was being judged by the teacher and by the observer, therefore they controlled their speech. Additionally, there were more cases of self-corrections. The students generally corrected grammar and vocabulary choice. Some students also corrected their interlocutors during conversations. Frequent use of circumlocution, definition-like descriptions and avoidance was observed during class-sessions whereas there were more strategies of brandnaming observed in informal student-student interactions. The students attempted to adjust the way to overcome a lexical problem according to their perception of what is relevant.

Teachers and their teaching methods may also influence their students' communication in the target language. The way teachers introduce and practise new vocabulary with their students turns out to be reflected in the student's selection of strategies. For example, during the Conference Interpreting seminar students are asked to do various translation exercises requiring approximation, use of synonyms, paraphrasing, etc. Teachers of regular General English classes introduce a new word in context, give synonyms, explain the word by presenting a quick scenario, image, or similes, or give a dictionary-like explanation of a particular word. Therefore, the students participating in a regular course employ a greater variety of communication strategies, since the constraints imposed on the students differ, depending on whether they are engaged in conversations or in interpreting. Teachers themselves proved to have a great influence on the selection of communication strategies by their students. Whether the teacher is a native speaker of English or Polish teacher of English may have an effect on strategy choice. While communicating with a native speaker the students avoided L1-based strategies, instead they used more effective strategies, the strategies based on the target language. They approximated a particular word, gave synonyms, described a word, whereas in conversations with Polish teachers of English the students chose varied strategies including L1-based strategies (e.g. language switch). There was also a dif-

ference in the use of cooperative strategies. When seeking assistance from Poles the students combined L1- and L2-based strategies.

For example:

What's kustosz in English? (cooperation+language switch)

When asking native speakers for cooperation they still avoided using L1-based strategies.

For example:

What do you call a person who takes care of a museum?

(cooperation+circumlocution)

Furthermore, in teacher-student interaction there were cases of strategy use by teachers for example: *modifying and simplifying their message, repeating their questions, giving synonyms of a particular word, describing it and varying the speed of their speech* which were then reflected in the learners' strategy selection.

3.4.2. Internal factors and their influence on the selection of communication strategies

Students' level of target language proficiency

A variety of studies attempted to test the hypothesis that there is a relation between proficiency level of the speaker and strategy choice. The paper points at a direct relation between the learner's level of language proficiency and the selection of communication strategies. Furthermore, it also reveals that learners with greater formal ability in the target language are able to modify the selection of strategies.

The level of language proficiency determines to some extent whether the strategy will be based on the mother tongue of the learner or on the target language. The L2-based strategies are preferred by more advanced learners of the target language who are more flexible in the target language and who have a greater experience in using the target language or any other foreign language.

The influence of the first language

Although the Polish language is perceived quite distant from the English language, there are a few examples of transfer from the learners' mother tongue (Polish) to the target language (English) while adopting a lexical communication strategy. For example: the strategy of literal lexical transfer involved word-for-word translations of the mother tongue lexicon, structures and collocations or connotations, etc.

Other psychological and sociological factors

Some psychological and sociological factors may also be identified which influence the target language learning and communication. Mostly, it is learner's language ego, i.e. *learner's identity* within one community and the language he/she uses, that may hinder the target language development. For example: a language learner's *attitude* towards the target language society and culture may have a considerable effect on the teaching/ learning process. When the learner's attitude towards the group is positive, the learner will acquire the target language more easily, he/she will look for occasions to use the language, which consequently may lead to a development of his/her foreign language proficiency. Moreover, the potential chances of using the target language may act as both a facilitator or a hindrance to the target language learning and usage. If the learner feels the knowledge of the target language is crucial to his/her career or that he/she will need to communicate by means of the target language, the learner acquires the target language more easily. However, if the learner realizes there is little chance to use the target language, it hinders his/her development of the target language communicative competence. Furthermore, the feeling of being *negatively perceived* by the target language community, by the teacher of English who is a native speaker may impede the learning of a foreign language.

Summing up, it has been demonstrated that some identifiable factors, both external and internal, govern strategy choice and use, and communication in general. The analysis of the factors reveals that the process of acquiring communicative competence may be influenced not only by the target language classroom but also by some psychological and sociological factors. It can be assumed that the most effective strategy users are those speakers who have formal proficiency in the target language and are able to modify the selection of strategies to explain the nature of a specific concept. Thus, it might seem that training students in the use of most effective communication strategies may lead to successful communication in the target language. But is communication strategy training possible and necessary? It has been shown that communication strategies were believed initially to have appeared exclusively in learner's interlanguage. However, after analyzing native speaker's speech, the same set of communication strategies have been found. Therefore, it may be assumed that target language learners do not have to be taught communication strategies, but they should rather be made aware of the strategies they use in their native language. They do not have to be taught communication skills, since they possess them in their mother tongue, but linguistic alternatives necessary to maintain and proceed in a conversation.

3.4.3. Pedagogical implications of the study – towards a model of communication strategy development

It may be assumed that when the students were taught the linguistic alternatives, their mastery of the target language was enhanced. Having enhanced their mastery of the target language, the students became more flexible in the target language and were able to vary strategies they used. Consequently, the students became conscious of the rich repertoire of communication strategies and felt more spontaneous in applying the strategies in new situations. Therefore, it is believed that there are three key features (Stages) of communication strategy development, namely:

1. awareness,
2. knowledge,
3. practice.

Making students aware of the existence and the high potential of communication strategies should begin any type of training in communication. Communication strategies are believed to exist in learner's native language, and to be used extensively by learners in communicating in their mother tongue. Language learners may be encouraged to observe and discuss linguistic patterns used in communication, and the techniques which interlocutors adopt to overcome problems in conversation. Therefore, Stage 1 in communication strategy development aims at making students aware of the existence and a variety of communication strategies in students' native language. Furthermore, it measures the effectiveness of the communication process not in terms of linguistic accuracy but in success of coding and decoding a message.

Stage 2 in the model of communication strategy development is devoted to improving students' analysis of the target language system. Learners' knowledge of linguistic forms is believed to facilitate the analysis of the language system, since the greater the knowledge, the more flexible in the target language students become, and eventually, are able to formulate hypotheses how to express the meaning. Thus, Stage 2 of communication strategy training consists of teaching the linguistic system itself. Therefore, learners are instructed about rules of the target language grammar, of vocabulary use, its restrictions, etc. and can develop their grammatical and discourse competence.

The final stage in the model of communication strategy development centers on practice. Here, the students are encouraged to use their knowledge of linguistic system and of communication strategies, in order to get their messages across. The learners are asked to do various activities and gain experience conveying meaning in the target language. The activities are invented in order to fulfill both *the interactional language function* (person-oriented tasks and activities)

and *the transactional language function* (message-oriented tasks and activities). The communicative tasks and activities mainly focus on the development of the target language communication by means of adopting communication strategies in the target language which may help interlocutors to get the meaning across in spite of linguistic deficiency. Therefore, they require using the most effective communication strategies, namely: L2-based strategies (e.g. circumlocution, approximation, or word coinage). The strategies being based on the target language point to the target language being the only way to communicate, hence, students are encouraged to use the target language as much as they can.

By means of the practice stage the students were found to develop their strategic competence, since they acquired the ability to analyze the language and communicative situation, to control the linguistic system, and eventually, to use effectively communication strategies. Summing up, the way in which the target language is handled in the classroom should help a learner to develop his/her communicative competence. Therefore, teachers should establish syllabuses which are geared towards very specific communicative needs.

Conclusion

Foreign language teachers should be encouraged to include teaching of communication strategies in their curriculum, since with the instruction and training of communication strategies, students are given self-confidence in the target language and eventually, their communicative competence is developed. In order to acquire flexibility and creativity in the use of what has already been mastered of the target language, learners may practise the use of description, approximation and other communication techniques. The teachers' task, then, is to make the learning of the target language a manageable process which focuses on conveying meaning (transactional communication) and is oriented towards the receiver of a message (interactional communication). In order to facilitate the target language learning and communication, the students should be made conscious of a variety of communication strategies they may adopt, which they have already acquired in their native language. By figuring out what factors may hinder or enhance the development of communicative competence, the teacher will be able to counteract, which eventually will allow him/her to witness the students' successful process of interpersonal communication.

However, strategy training cannot be limited to abstract or theoretical considerations of learner strategies, but should include a realistic interaction among

students, contextualized learning, and should train students in practical options for language learning and use. Therefore, researchers insist on integrating training into regular target language tasks over a prolonged time rather than short, one-time strategy training. Instructing students in the use of communication strategies should be closely linked with future needs, and thus provide students with strategies they may transfer to future language tasks and to the learning of other subjects. Furthermore, the instructions how to employ strategies need to be individualized, and deal with students' attitudes and beliefs towards language education, their anxiety and motivation. Finally, the teacher should make sure strategy training will enable learners to evaluate their progress and make their learning more self-directed. The research on good language learners and the research on strategy training provide us with evidence that those language learners who receive learner/strategy training in their language education learn better, faster, and more effectively since they are able to self-direct their learning and choose strategies most appropriate for them.

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ABSTRACT

Recent years have witnessed an increasing interest in the area of learner strategies. Theory and research in second/foreign language learning strongly suggest that language learners adopt a variety of strategies in order to acquire a better command of the target language or use the target language most effectively. In the seventies a number of “good language learner studies” were conducted (e.g. Rubin 1975, Stern 1975), which aimed at distinguishing factors contributing to success in second/foreign language learning. The studies initiated research on what came to be known as learner strategies. At first the strategies were only described within a framework of the learner’s interlanguage, thus, they were believed to be employed exclusively by language learners. However, there can be a number of situations in which native speakers adopt strategies in the comprehension of different messages, or when faced with problems in communication. Therefore, researchers tried to address such issues as: What is a strategy? How can one determine when language use is strategic? How to delimit the context for a strategy in language use? How and why do language users employ strategies? What influences strategy use and choice? These questions have dominated the research on learner strategies resulting in a constant flow of publications on learner strategies and various explanations suggested for this phenomenon. However, the studies which have been conducted so far have not exhausted the area of investigation and, thus, encourage further research.

In the present paper, an attempt is made to shed some new light on the problem of communication in a language that has not been developed, and relate the concept of communication strategies to the Polish context.

Taking into account what has been achieved so far on the issue of communication strategies, it attempts to investigate the notion of communication strategies employed by Polish advanced learners of English when they encounter lexical problems. The theoretical framework that has been built for many years has been applied to a practical analysis of students' performance.