

Developing Student's Communication Skills through the Use of Communication Strategies and Writing: Part 1

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Abstract

The 20th century has seen a number of language teaching methods. Some of them at first seemed to be promising new approaches to second language acquisition, but failed to help students in their quest to use the target language communicatively. Within the last 30 years communicative language teaching (CLT) has become popular among language instructors as a new and improved way to teach English as a second or foreign language.

Since 1989, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) has striven to improve the communicative ability of Japanese students through the implementation of CLT into the curriculum of language education. However, many institutions have been unable to make the necessary changes for successful implementation of CLT, which calls for adjustments in lesson plans, materials and teaching approaches.

Because of this, it is likely that many university students in Japan have never encountered CLT and communication strategies (CSs), which are important to foster smooth and natural conversations. Moreover, it can be assumed that there have not been many attempts to implement the writing of paragraphs to support the development of conversations.

This paper presents the results of action research (AR) conducted over a period of two years. The first year of AR was conducted at a university in Nagoya, and deals mostly with how CLT was implemented using reading material as the main source and how to support students' speaking and writing abilities through post-reading activities. The second year of the study, conducted at a different institution of higher education, investigated how the use of CSs relates to the frequency and length of pauses students make in conversations, and how writing of paragraphs on the conversation topics affect students' oral output. Furthermore, the relation between structured support for students speaking development and student's motivation was explored. It is worthwhile to note that the research focus changed over time in order to develop a more communicative classroom by using different approaches and constantly adjusting to the requirements of the context in order to successfully implement CLT.

Data was primarily collected through questionnaires, student interviews, recording of

audio- and video-data. Results indicated that there might be a connection between the use of CSs and pauses student make in their conversations. However, there are various factors that could have an influence on it. Students found that writing of paragraphs on the conversation topics affected their oral output positively, and the data collected suggest this as well. It was difficult to determine whether structured support for students speaking development had an influence on their motivation, but the result suggested that it was beneficial to students learning.

Introduction

When I was living in New York for a year as an au pair, my host mother told me about her time in Japan and that she used to teach English there. As soon as I heard my host mother's story, I knew I had a calling. Ever since I was an undisciplined junior high school student, I had wanted a chance to teach. The reason for that was because I had not enjoyed school, and I told myself if I ever was a teacher, I would make the lessons more interesting. I wanted to travel to Japan, and if I had a chance to teach, I would take it. Many years later, I arrived in Japan, and a few months after arriving, I contacted several language schools and finally got a job at Berlitz in Nagoya. After some training, I started to work as a German teacher. The basic method used at Berlitz at that time was the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) and students would memorize a grammatical pattern and later expand on it. Teachers could only use the target language, and it was a long and difficult process, especially for total beginners. I found that for some people it worked, but for others it did not. What I liked about it, was that students could speak about 50% of the lesson and that is quite a lot for novice learners in a one on one setting. Even though it was nice to see some students being successful learners, it was at times frustrating working with individuals, who had a difficult time with that method.

Later, I became an assistant English teacher at an elementary school where I taught every grade from kindergarten up to sixth grade. There I usually taught every lesson by myself without any help from the homeroom teachers. It was a good learning experience for me because I needed to create my own materials and teach each grade differently. Basically, the children only learned new vocabulary and simple sentence patterns, but no conversation as all. I saw potential in the children that was not being realized, and at the same time I knew that I needed to develop my teaching further.

After this, I completed six courses at the School for International Training to learn more about teaching. While taking some courses, I understood that teaching language is more than memorizing words and patterns, and for the first time, I felt that there can be a certain amount of freedom and creativity in teaching a language.

When I started teaching at university in Japan, I decided to try to teach communicatively, and it felt right, but I knew that I still needed more tools in order to become the kind of teacher I wanted to become. At that time, I tried to enroll in an online masters program based in Australia. Initially, I thought about moving to Australia for a year, but after talking to my wife and considering the cost of living and studying in a foreign country, I decided that the only option would be an online program. When I asked the head

teacher at the university where I worked for a letter of reference to send with my application, she told me about the master program at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies (NUFS). Instead of applying for the online course, I chose to apply to NUFS.

After one year as a non-degree student, I decided to base my first year of AR on reading and introduce communicative post-reading activities and writing. I chose reading material for my studies because I had been teaching it prior to entering the MA program, and I knew from my own experience that reading is an important means of language acquisition. Perhaps the main reason I chose to work with reading material was because I felt comfortable working with it. In my first year as a non-degree student, I became familiar with communicative Language teaching and thought to combine it with reading. My goal for the first year in the master program was to focus on timed-conversations and writing of fun-essays with support from a variety of post-reading activities.

In the first semester of 2016, my first year of AR, I learned a few important things. One was that “less is more,” and that I had to set priorities in my teaching to reach realistic goals. Another was to rethink my role as teacher and my “Atlas Complex,” believing that the full responsibility of my students' learning rested on my shoulders. The semester was somewhat chaotic as I tried to find my way. As simple as it sounds, I realized that for students to improve their ability to communicate in English, they need to be exposed to it, practice it, and use it. It was hard for me at first, to step back, but in this first semester, I started to see how students could work together and help each other learn and that their success was not solely my responsibility. The most important thing I learned in my first year, was that I had to step out of my comfort zone and take more risks in my teaching. Changing beliefs is difficult, so not all these issues have been resolved, but I believe that knowing I need to be constantly be open to change, helped me especially prepare for my second year in the master program, and as a result, I have been able to make changes in my teaching.

I began teaching a new group of students in the second semester of 2016 and wanted to focus on more explicit teaching of CS to help my students in their speaking development. Furthermore, I wanted to use more time on writing and stop extensive reading, teaching of reading strategies, and other activities that were too time consuming. I made some adjustments in my teaching. However, I did not have all the freedom I wanted because the students had already bought the reading textbook, so I needed to use it. In hindsight, this was a crucial experience for me because it was a real-world teaching situation with obstacles to overcome. In this teaching context, I had to step out of my comfort zone and be creative with the materials I had. I did not rely solely on the text anymore, but instead I tried to tailor my lessons more to my students needs and the learning outcomes I had in mind. I set priorities and focused on what I needed to do to see an improvement in my students' speaking and writing ability, and compared to the first semester where I was unfocused and overwhelmed, the outcome was much better.

When looking back I realized that even though I had gained valuable theoretical knowledge through my NUFS classes, it was through AR and applying what I had learned to real people in a real teaching situation that I learned the most. During my first semester in 2016, I tired, but failed to help my students perform three-minute conversations, but in the second semester, I started to give my students many

opportunities to practice their conversations and use CSs. The second semester was much more successful, and the students carried out these conversations with ease and improved their writing as well. It was not easy, and it was stressful to try out new things, but in the end, it seemed that most students had a good learning experience, and they reported they believed that they became better in speaking and writing.

In my second year of AR, I only wanted to focus on timed-conversations, the teaching of CSs and writing on the conversation topics. My teaching context changed, and I was confronted with a different group of students: I was faced with a group of low-level students with not much interest in learning English. Although I chose a new textbook for this new group that focused on timed-conversations and CSs mainly, I soon realized that it was too difficult for them. This provided a different learning opportunity for me because I was not pressed for time, I was able to experiment with different ways to approach the content I wanted to teach. This second year gave me a chance to adjust my teaching style and the materials that I used for this group of students and to try out new things. I had to deal with a group of students who had little interest in learning English and very low ability to begin with, and I had to pay attention to my actual research and research questions, to gain results. The data I gathered during this second year suggest that students became more fluent speakers and were able to increase the length and quality of their conversations through the use of CSs. Furthermore, students believed that the writing activities supported their oral output and the structured support for their speaking development was a motivating factor.

Overall, my two years of AR have changed me as I became braver as an instructor in several ways. First, I learned to step back and put the students more in the center of my work. Secondly, I learned to look at the teaching context more and act more responsively to it by making adjustments like creating new materials that matched the specific needs of the students and using the textbook more creatively. I also learned to understand what communicative teaching is all about and what is necessary to bring about a more communicative classroom.

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a theoretical background to this study. The chapter is divided into the following five topics: (1) communicative language teaching, (2) communicative competence, (3) communication strategies, (4) motivation, and (5) the relationship between speech and writing. Each topic is presented as its own section and begins with a definition of the topic. In each section, related literature and former studies will be discussed. Where possible, the topics will be linked to the Japanese teaching context and the study this paper reports.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) began to rise in popularity in the 1960's. Before this, most language learners had to rely on memorization of sentences, phrases, and grammatical structures. Language that was presented in many classrooms had little to do with how people communicated outside it. CLT presented a new approach. To define CLT is somewhat difficult because its definition depends on who is asked, but most agree to certain features that are included in CLT. Those are that CLT is a meaning-

based and learner-centered approach to second language teaching, where fluency, not accuracy, is given priority. Moreover, the emphasis is mainly on the comprehension and production of messages, and not the teaching and correction of language form (Spada, 2007, p. 272).

With CLT, the goal is to help learners build the ability to communicate in the target language. This is different from previous methods in which grammatical competence, where grammar drives the teaching approach, was commonly given top priority. In Japan, where English instruction has long been taught in more traditional, grammar-focused ways like the audio-lingual method (ALM), the grammar translation method, and situational language teaching—all of which can still be found in the majority of language classrooms—students seem to lack the ability to communicate in English. These older methods focus on grammatical precision, and accuracy is given priority over fluency. In these teaching contexts, students are discouraged from making mistakes because it is believed that incorrect forms will be adopted and used by students. In more recent years, there has been a realization of the limits of these more restrictive methods. MEXT implemented new guidelines in English language education that focuses more on CLT in order to promote learners' ability to use English for communication. Since 1989, MEXT has strived to improve the communicative ability of secondary school students to combat the label of its citizens as having one of the lowest levels of English proficiency in the developed world (Muligan, 2005). Even after studying six years of English, many Japanese students still lag behind other nations students communicative ability, MEXT has encouraged teachers to implement CLT within their classrooms (Kavanagh, 2012).

Richards and Rodger (1999), as cited by Efrizal (2012), state that the communicative approach to language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. Harmer (1998) describes CLT activities as ones that focus on real communication without too much attention on grammatical patterns. This is in contrast to non-communicative activities where the focus is on grammatical accuracy. Since the goal of CLT is to help develop students' ability to communicate in English, then its objective is to develop their communicative competence, which will be addressed in the next section.

According to Spada (2007), CLT is described by some applied linguists as having reached a turning point, one which “explicit direct elements are gaining significance in teaching communicative abilities and skills” (Celce-Murica & Dörnyei, 1997, p. 141). For Brown (1997) teaching these communicative skills requires the following:

(1) Overall Goal

CLT suggests a focus on all components of communication: grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence.

(2) Relationship of Form and Function

Language teaching techniques are designed to engage learners in pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes.

(3) Fluency and Function

A focus on students 'flow' of comprehension and production, and a focus on the formal accuracy of production are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques.

(4) Focus on Real-World Context

Classroom tasks should equip students with the skills necessary for communication in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Therefore, students in a communicative class have to use the language productively and receptively.

(5) Autonomy and Strategic Involvement

To create opportunities for students to focus on their own learning process through their styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for production and comprehension.

(6) Teacher Roles

The teacher's role is that of a facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing fount of knowledge, and students are encouraged to construct the meaning through genuine linguistic interaction.

(7) Students Roles

The classroom is learner-centered. Students are encouraged to be co-operative and collaborative. Students are active participants in their own learning process. (pp. 46-47)

These principles that Brown describes suggest that the lesson design and the role of teachers often need to be adjusted to create a learner-centered environment. Instead of teacher-centered classrooms found for example in the ALM, teachers take the role of guides and facilitators. That gives learners more autonomy in the classroom, and students are encouraged to be more active and responsible as learners. As Brown (2007) states, the CLT classroom should be learner-centered and collaborative. That can require teachers to give clear and precise instructions, and especially in classrooms with lower-level students, scaffolding and structured input are necessary, for example, having students write about topics about which they will later discuss could provide these.

Richards (2006) also recognized that CLT required change for teachers and states that after it became more mainstream, language teachers and teaching institutions started to reorganize their teaching syllabuses and classroom materials. Instead of grammar being the starting point and focus of language education, the syllabus and lesson plan focus shifted to more on a communicative and meaning-based approach. He summarizes the overarching key points of CLT as follows:

1. Real communication should be the focus of language learning.
2. Learners should be given opportunities to experiment and try out what they know.
3. Educators should be tolerant of student's errors as they indicate that the learners are building up their communicative competence.
4. Provide opportunities for learners to develop both accuracy and fluency.
5. The different skills such as speaking, writing, reading and listening should be linked together, since they usually occur in the real world.
6. Let students deduce or discover grammar rules. (p.13)

Changes toward using CLT have been taking place in Japan, especially since MEXT started promoting a more communicative approach; however, adoption has not been easy.

Howatt (1984) proposed that there are two versions of CLT: a weak version and a strong version. The weak version of CLT is based on the idea that the components of communicative competence can be identified and therefore systematically taught. This weak version of CLT highlights the significance

of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and can be integrated into wider programs of language teaching because it is not fundamentally different than traditional teaching approaches.

The strong version of CLT is based on the claim that “language is acquired through communication” (Howatt, 1984, p. 279). That means that learners acquire the structural properties of a language and use this system in communication, and they also discover the system itself as they learn how to communicate in the target language. Thus, in CLT, activities tend to focus on communication with activities like communicative games, role plays and problem-solving tasks. These offer the learners opportunities to practice their communicative skills meaningfully in various contexts. Ideally, students rarely use their native language, and the teacher uses it only in limited ways. Since this approach focuses on meaning and fluency, it promotes communicative competence, contrary to more traditional methods that focus on accuracy and grammatical competence, errors are almost never corrected by teachers.

One empirical study carried out by Savignon (1972) as cited by Lightbown and Spada (2006) compared three groups of French-learning college students in terms of their linguistic and communicative competence. There were three groups (1) a communicative one (2) a cultural one, and (3) a control group. All groups received audiolingual instruction focusing on the practice and manipulation of grammatical forms for about four hours every week. Additionally, each group received an hour of a different treatment. The control group received grammar and pronunciation drills, the cultural group received activities related to the awareness of culture and the communicative group received meaningful and creative communicative exercises. Tests to measure linguistic and communicative abilities were given to each group before and after these instructions. The result showed that there was not much difference of linguistic competence among the groups. However, in terms of communicative competence, the communicative group scored far higher than the other two groups.

Sato (2008) conducted a study that investigated EFL teachers' beliefs and understanding of CLT. The participants for this study consisted of 19 EFL teachers, 15 of them were male and four female. The data were collected through interviews, class observations, surveys and materials. Sato found that generally there was a lack of opportunity for teacher discussion about the lessons, and even though most participants seemed to understand the importance of CTL, their lessons did not include communicative activities. Some teachers were resistant to try CLT, while others tried something new, but only to a small extent and were not successful changing their teaching style. Class observations revealed that the majority of EFL teachers continued using grammar translation method. Moreover, although the participants had opportunities to observe other classes using CLT and attend workshops, most of the participants did not try out new things because they were worried to take risks. The results of this study show that for Japanese teachers exposed to CLT, there are contextual obstacles that impede their ability to change their teaching practices within their classrooms.

To summarize it appears that there is agreement that the goal of CLT is to develop communicative competence. To develop this, schools as well as teachers need to make adjustments in order implement CLT effectively. Especially in Japan, where grammar has been the central element in language education,

educators need to add communicative opportunities to classroom instruction and learn to see errors as an important part of language acquisition. Since communicative competence is central to CLT, I will explain the concept of communicative competence further in the following section.

Communicative Competence

In the 1960s, the term communicative competence began to appear in discussion about language learning. “It became a symbol of what the ALM could not be: flexible, creative and responsive to learners needs” (Savignon, 1997, p. 7). Teachers were realizing that by focusing only on grammar and mistakes in form, many learners had difficulties acquiring the target language. For teachers who did not regard ALM or grammar translation as effective methods for language learning, the concept of developing communicative competence became synonymous with progressive, innovating teaching. For some, it became a chance to experiment through trial and error, and those were able to teach more freely. Lightbrown and Spada (2013) remark that “when learners are given the opportunity to engage in interaction, they are compelled to negotiate for meaning, that is to express and clarify their intensions, thoughts opinions, etc., in a way that permits them to arrive at mutual understanding” (p. 165). It is this negotiated meaning that is central to communicative competence.

Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence in terms of three competences: (1) grammatical competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, and (3) strategic competence. Canale (1983) refined the model by adding (4) discourse competence. Here are the four competences described in more detail:

(1) Grammatical Competence

Grammatical competence, which developed from Chomsky’s notion of linguistic competence, is indispensable for the practice of linguistic formation of the language. The focus is on selecting suitable structures which helps the learners to use the language appropriately and freely.

(2) Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistic competence refers to an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role-relationships, the shared information of the participants and the purpose for their interaction.

(3) Discourse Competence

Discourse competence refers to the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their inter-connectedness and of how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text.

(4) Strategic Competence

Strategic competence refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and re-direct communication. (Savignon 1997, pp. 40-47), see Figure 1)

All these competences are important elements in naturally occurring conversations.

Savignon further proposes five components of a communicative curriculum that include language arts, language for a purpose, personal second language (L2) use, theater arts, and beyond the classroom, which means opportunities for learners to use the target language outside the classroom (Savignon, 1997). She goes on to say, "We may take, then, as our starting point for defining communicative competence the identification of behaviors of people considered successful in what they do, specifically, the identification of the characteristics of good communicators" (p. 9). The following are her characteristics of competence in communication:

- (1.) Communicative competence is a dynamic rather than a static concept. It depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more people who share to some degree the same symbolic system. In this sense, then, communicative competence can be said to be an interpersonal rather than an intrapersonal trait.
- (2.) Communicative competence applies to both written and spoken language, as well as to many other symbolic systems.
- (3.) Communicative competence is context specific. Communication takes place in an infinite variety of situations, and success in a particular role depends on one's understanding of the context and on prior experience.
- (4.) There is a theoretical difference between competence and performance. Competence is defined as a presumed underlying ability and performance as the overt manifestation of that ability. Competence is what one knows. Performance is what one does. However, only performance is observable, and it is only through performance that competence can be developed, maintained and evaluated (pp.14-15).

Communicative competence is relative, not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all the interlocutors. It makes sense, then, to speak of degrees of communicative competence. (pp. 14-15). This suggests a strong connection to CLT, and it shows where CLT is grounded. Negotiation for meaning in various situations and settings is at the heart of communicative competence, and that is related to how real communication in the real-world functions.

Figure 1 shows Savignon's components of communicative competence, namely grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Strategic competence is placed right at the bottom and it is an essential component for any novice language learner.

As shown in Figure 2, Bachman (1990) modified this theoretical model further and proposed a more complex model of communicative competence called "language competence." He divides language competence into various parts as seen in Figure 2. Organizational competence involves rules and systems that govern what we can do with different forms of language, both at the sentence level and the discourse level, namely grammatical competence and textual competence. Pragmatic competence includes illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. Illocutionary competence refers to functional aspects of language like receiving and sending intended meanings. Under sociolinguistic competence Bachman sees issues of formality, politeness, register, metaphorical, as well as cultural aspects of language (p. 87).

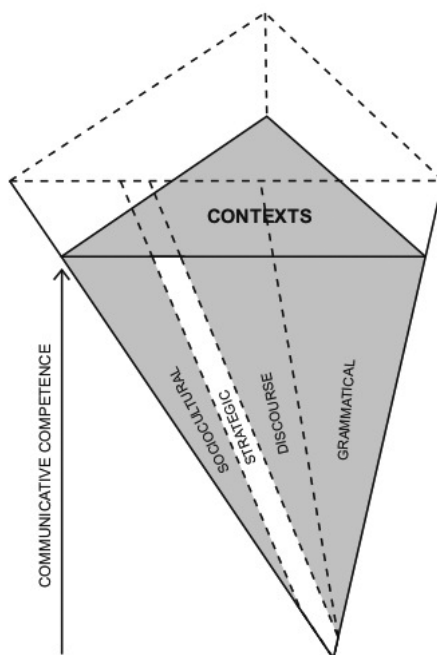


Figure 1. Components of communicative competence (Savignon, 2002)

Savignon (1997) concludes, “Language is communication, communication rich with social meaning. Talking about communication involves talking about grammar, yes, and more. Knowledge of language includes knowledge of grammar, syntax, vocabulary, modes of discourse, print and non-print genres, and rhetorical strategies, the use of language to influence others” (p. 256). For teachers, it is important to take all of these into account and understand the theory of communicative competence. Based on that, teachers need to create a practical model that is applicable in the classroom through CLT.

For language learners to interact in the target language and negotiate for meaning, they need tools to overcome difficulties during their conversations and for enhancing the quality of their interaction. One tool they can use is communication strategies, and in the next section, I will introduce communication strategies that serve as conversation helpers.

Communication Strategies

When language learners try to communicate in the target language they face certain challenges. These challenges could be, for example, to express themselves properly in order to be understood, or dealing with lexical and discourse problems. In cases where language learners face these issues but do not know how to overcome them, their speech becomes less fluent and natural. Communication strategies (CSs) are tools that help language learners when confronted with these difficulties.

The term CSs was coined by Selinker (1972) as one of the five “processes” he identified in interlanguage development. In the 1980, the interest in CSs really took off for three reasons: first the publication of a

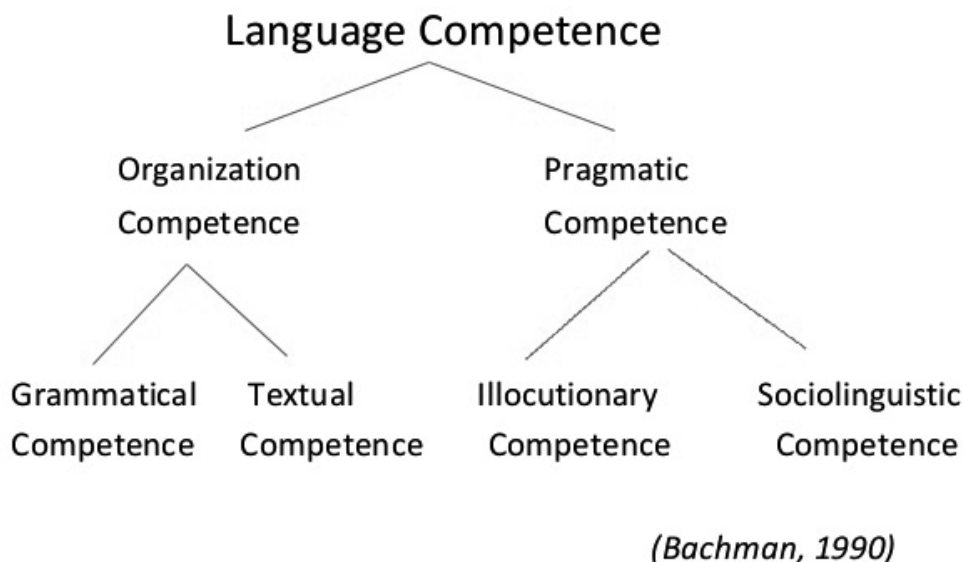


Figure 2. Components of language competence (Bachman, 1990)

collection of papers devoted specifically to CSs, second an influential project directed at describing and theorizing CSs, called the Nijmegen Project, and third was when Bialystock's (1990) "monograph linking CSs to her general theory of L2 acquisition based on the distinction between analysis and control" (Ellis, 2007, pp. 501-502). "CSs can be defined as discourse strategies that are evident in social interactions involving learners, or they can be treated as a cognitive process involved in the use of the L2 in reception and production" (Ellis, 2008, p. 502).

Dörnyei and Scott (1997) distinguished three types of communication problems that can give rise to CSs: (1) own performance problems (i.e., the learner recognizes that something s/he said is incorrect or only partly correct), (2) other performance problems (i.e. the learner finds a problem with something said to him/her), and (3) processing time pressure (i.e. the learner needs more time to plan L2 speech).

The view on CSs offered by scholars comes from two main perspectives: interactional and psycholinguistic. The interactional view focuses on the interaction process between language learners and their interlocutors, mainly the way meaning is negotiated by one or both parties (for example, Tarone, 1980; Rost & Ross, 1991; Williams, Inscoc, & Tasker, 1997). In this view CSs are not only regarded as a phenomenon for problem solving during communication but also as devices with pragmatic discourse functions for message enhancement. This process occurs in conversations between L1 speakers where the speakers instinctively overcome problems that emerge. L1 speakers also naturally have tools for enhancing the quality of their conversation. On the other hand, researchers with a psycholinguistic orientation see CSs as problem-solving behaviors arising from lack in the lexical knowledge of L2 speakers (Bialystok,

1983 a; Poulisse, 1990; Cohen & Macaro, 2007, pp.207-208).

In a communicative teaching context, it is essential for students to learn to apply CSs. In the case of Japan, where most students had been taught in non-communicative methods before entering university, I have found many students have difficulties performing pair or group conversations. Through applying CSs, students are able to express their opinions better, understand their partner easier and are able to carry on more fluent conversations.

Nakatani (2005) investigated the effects of CSs training on 62 Japanese female college students. The strategy instruction group received metacognitive instruction, focusing on interactional strategy usage, while the control group received only normal communicative instruction with no explicit focus on CSs. To measure the effects of the training, the students had to complete a pre- and post-, oral communications test. The result showed that the students increased their use of strategies (in comparison to the control group) and significantly improved their test scores. However, he reports that it is important to continuously “help the students notice how to plan, monitor and evaluate their CSs use” (p. 218).

Nakatani and Goh (2007) state that one issue concerning CSs is that there are still different definitions to describe them. Another issue is that future research needs to find accurate measurements of oral proficiency levels. They advise to use sets of similar criteria to examine proficiency, especially oral proficiency. Newly designed standardized tests for interactional benchmarking of learner’s oral proficiency unlike TOEIC or TOFEL may be useful. “As a future research strand, it would be desirable to investigate the interrelationship between CSs use, CSs instruction and variables such as learning styles, attitudes, anxiety, motivation, metacognitive knowledge, confidence and self- efficacy” (Nakatani & Goh, pp. 226-227). All these are factors that occur in a classroom and should be taken into account in order to better understand how and why the use of CSs can be effective in communication and yet be confusing for learners. Implicit teaching of CSs through structured input may give students tools to overcome difficulties that occur in conversations. If students find it easier to get their meaning across and understand their interlocutors, it may be motivating for them. In communicative classroom where students are more responsible for their learning, motivation plays an important role. Thus in the next section, I will explore related literature and research on motivation.

Motivation

One of the basic elements in acquiring knowledge or abilities like languages or artistic skill is perseverance. In the case of language learners, it is essential they understand their learning goals: why they are studying the target language and what outcome and benefits there might be gained? When looking at goal setting, one must consider motivation.

Motivation in second language learning is a complex phenomenon. There are two factors that help when defining it. One is the learner’s communicative need, and the other is learners’ attitudes towards the second language community. Lightbown and Spada (2013, p. 87) mention that if learners need to speak the second language in a wide range of social situations or to fulfill professional ambitions, they will perceive the communicative value of the second language and are therefore likely to be motivated

to become proficient in it. That would, for example, apply to students who study overseas. Similarly, if learners have favorable attitudes towards the speakers of the language, they will desire more contact with them. Gardner and Lambert (1972) as cited in Lightbown and Spada (2013) coined the terms instrumental motivation (language learning for immediate or practical goals) and integrative motivation (language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment through contact with speakers of the other language). For a long time, it was believed that integrative motivation would more likely lead to successful learning outcomes. However, in some contexts, instrumental motivation proved to be a better indicator of positive learning outcomes. In second language learning, both types of motivation have been found to be related to success. Early research considered motivation as a stable characteristic of learners, but more recent research emphasizes the dynamic nature of motivation and tries to account for the changes that take place over time (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Miyahara (1997) carried out a large-scale study with university students who were learning English in China and Japan in order to compare their motivation as well as other aspects related to learning. Even though there are vast differences between China and Japan, these two countries share some cultural and linguistic similarities, for example the way people view religion and their writing system based on characters is similar. The researchers found a factor that both groups shared, namely the interest in traveling and making friends with people from L2 communities, which the researchers labeled "personal communication." However, Chinese students showed more desire to become integrated into the L2 communities, thus they had more motivation and the study suggests that this factor may be why Chinese students had a higher average in English proficiency than the Japanese students.

In another study, Matsukawa and Tachibana (1996) conducted a survey of Chinese and Japanese junior high school students to measure their motivation and found that Chinese students showed more interest in studying English than the Japanese students did. Moreover, while the Chinese students maintained their interest regardless of their grade, the Japanese students tended to lose interest as they progressed in grade level. Dörnyei and Ushida's (2009) findings also suggest that the motivation of the Chinese students was solely instrumental because they only cared about the utility of English in their future job and in gaining a high salary. However, the motivation of the Japanese students was multifaceted because it was found to be both instrumental and integrative because it consisted of interest in the learning process, high achievement, and English culture (pp. 69-70)

Since second and foreign language learning commonly happens within a classroom, Gardner (1982) proposes a model that focuses specifically on second language acquisition in a structured classroom setting rather than a natural environment. In his socio-educational model, Gardner identified a number of interrelated factors when one is learning a second language. His model attempts to interrelate four features of second language acquisition. These include the social and cultural milieu, individual learner differences, the setting or context in which learning takes place and linguistic outcomes. Within this model, motivation is perceived to be composed of three elements: effort, desire and affect. Effort refers to the time-period spent studying the language and the drive of the learner, desire indicates how much the learner wants to become proficient in the language, and affect illustrates the learner's emotional reactions with regards to

language study.

Norris-Hold (2001) summarizes a study conducted by Berwick and Ross (1989) in which the researchers observed a group of 90 first-year Japanese university students who were enrolled in a compulsory international commerce English course. The aim of the study was to determine their degree and form of motivation. The students were found to possess instrumental motivation, which was in this case to pass the entrance examination for their desired university. After passing the entrance exam, their motivation for studying English declined and was found to be low at the start of their first semester at university. However, on completion of 150 hours of class time, the motivation level of students improved. The main reasons for this alternation in motivation were believed to be the use of a variety of instructional techniques and adoption of an exchange program with an American sister university. That suggests that instructional techniques can impact motivation. The students who first were concerned about the entrance exam requirements and were found to have instrumental motivation may have gained integrative motivation after the exchange program started by becoming interested in their peers and the peers' culture, so their reasons for studying English became more important. This supports Lightbrown and Spada's (2013) assertion that that motivation is not a stable characteristic but rather dynamic in nature.

Dörnyei (2005), in his "L2 motivational self-system" outlined the basics of a new approach to conceptualizing L2 learning motivation. It focuses explicitly on aspects of the individual's self, yet it is "compatible with other influential conceptualizations of motivation by other researchers" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 9). Placing the self at the center of our motivational thinking has opened up a wide range of novel research directions. Ushioda (2009), for example, investigated a model that she labeled "person-in-context relational view" that centers on the individual as well. This model considers the complexity and idiosyncrasy of a persons' motivational response to certain events and experiences in their lives. What is key is that motivation is a very personalized thing, and it is important to acknowledge that motivation is very complex, and teachers need to understand that their students are multi-dimensional. In the case of Japanese students, Miyahara (1996) and Matsukawa and Tachibana (1996) found that Chinese students tended to perform better than Japanese students and the difference could be attributed to instrumental motivation. If students do not give much importance to learning a second language, they may have low motivation to learn it. How can a teacher motivate this kind of student to learn English? One answer may be to give structured support by carefully scaffolding the lessons and providing small tasks that can be achieved thereby building students' confidence.

This may act as a motivating factor. Of particular interest to me is the use of writing tasks designed to support conversations. In the next section, I will discuss the relationship between speech and writing.

Relationship between speaking and writing

Many times, in order for students to express their thoughts verbally, they need to have organized the ideas or opinions that they want to convey. For language learners, it might be helpful to shape their thoughts by writing them before they discuss them with a partner or in a group. In this section, I will explore the relationship between speaking and written language in more detail.

Hughes (2013) postulates that speaking is defined as the interpersonal function of language through which meaning is produced and transferred and “writing is a way to produce language you do naturally when you speak” (Mayers, 2005, p. 2). Silva (1990) cited in Fathali & Sotoudehnaman (2015) remarks that writing follows a standardized form of grammar, structure and vocabulary, which is inseparable from the structure of spoken sentences. Additionally, Graham, MacArthur and Fitzgerald (2013) state “writing is an indispensable tool for learning and communicating. We use writing as a medium to gather, preserve and transmit information” (p. 5). Jordan (1997) as stated by Fathali and Sotoudehnama (2008) comments, “although writing and speaking are two separate language skills, they both belong to the classification of productive skills and because they share many similar components, they are very much interrelated” (p.1)

Writing and speaking both convey information. When writing, there is more room for ordering one's thoughts because it is a much slower process than speaking, which is by nature more spontaneous. It is likely that when students write about what they want to express, the writing can later support their utterances. Fathali and Sotoudehnaman believe that there has been little attempt to investigate the impact of writing practice on the speaking proficiency of learners. However, there have been a few studies investigating this relationship.

El-Koumy (1998) conducted a study investigating the effect of dialogue journal writing on EFL student's speaking proficiency. The experimental group received training in dialog journal writing in addition to classroom instructions, while the control group received only the regular classroom instructions. All students had to conduct a pre- and post-test on English speech. The results indicated, that while both groups scored about equally on the pre-test, the experimental group scored significantly higher on the post-test. He adds that there are several studies that view speaking and writing as similar forms (Cooper, 1982) and other studies that point to the differences between these two skills, like one conducted by Mazzie (1987) but there were not many studies conducted that deal with the effect of writing on speaking.

Stotsky (1987) cited by Moxley (1990) identified two different theories between the relationship of speech and writing. They can be referred as the unidirectional theory and the multidirectional theory. The unidirectional theory claims the relationship as a one-way sequence in which speech determines the development of writing. Metaphorically it could be said that writing is like “frozen speech” Moran (1987, p. 127). Although the unidirectional theory has a long tradition, there seems to be serious problems with its claims, and it has come under criticism. Moxley (1990) points out that the support for the multidirectional theory is clearer in contemporary behavior analyses than in early “stimulus and response” psychology, that conceptualizes behavior in terms of stimuli and responses. In contrast, the multidirectional theory holds that writing also influences speech and there are other important influences on the development of writing (Moxley, 1990).

Zhu (2007) report, that students with high writing proficiency can speak better than the ones with low language proficiency. Weissberg (2006) as cited in Fathali and Sotoudehnama (2015) believes that students can improve their language skills as well as their social skills through fundamental writing practice since oral and written skills share the same strategies such as topic selection and providing comments.

Lee and Van Patten (2003) believe that “writing is an act of communication—,that is, it involves the

expression, interpretation and negotiation for meaning, just as speaking does”. (p. 244) Newton (1995) found that when learners negotiate for meaning the vocabulary used is present in their written output as well. The results these researchers present suggest that there is evidence of a connection between speaking and writing, and it is strongly suggested to incorporate writing exercises into a communicative classroom.

Scaffolding

The term scaffolding refers to a variety of instructional techniques used to help students progressively better understanding and, ultimately, greater independence. Scaffolding was first introduced in the late 1950s by Jerome Brunner, and its instruction includes systematic sequencing of prompted content, materials, tasks and teachers' support to optimize language learning and teaching.

Wood (1976) defines scaffolding as a kind of process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts. (p.90). As cited in Celece-Murica 2001), Peregoy and Boyle (1997) explained that scaffolding involves the setting up of “temporary support, provided by capable people, that permit learners to participate in the complex process before they are able to do so unassisted (p.166).

Scaffolding helps students work in what was defined by Vigotsky as the “Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD) which describes language learners' process of moving from what they know to material that is just out of their reach. Through scaffolding students can reach higher levels of achievement that might be otherwise not be possible.

Mariani (1997) states three reasons of why scaffolding is useful:

- (1) To clarify the purpose and give clear, step-by-step instructions.
- (2) To promote cooperative tasks so students are attuned to helping rather than competing.
- (3) To give positive affective attitude encouraging safe relationships. (p.2)

Bradly (2004) has identified effective types of scaffolding among which the following are most often mentioned: a) Simplifying language, b) Ask students to complete sentences or fill in the blanks rather than having students try to come up with the entire sentence. c) Use visuals, for example, graphic organizers, outlines, pictures etc., and d) Use gestures by establishing predictable routines like miming actions etc.

Scaffolding in teaching is an essential way to help students to make progress and achieve their goals. When faced with a class of students with a low ability in English or a class of individuals with mixed ability it is even more so important to apply techniques of scaffolding.

Summary

The literature presented in this section provided a theoretical background to this study. It addressed (1) communicative language teaching, (2) communicative competence, (3) communication strategies, (4) motivation, and (5) the relationship between speech and writing. The findings of the various scholars introduced suggest that CLT is a method closely related to how language is used in an L1 environment and asks for the negotiation for meaning instead placing grammar in the center of language acquisition. However, if applied in classrooms it takes major adjustments from institutions, instructors as well as materials and lesson plans, that need to be adapted. CS are tools for language learners that help solving

problems that occur during conversations and help learners to carry more smooth and natural conversations. Motivation is very much linked to the individual's goals and desire and by understanding it, teachers are able to support learners. Lastly the interrelation between writing and speaking, and lack of studies that focus on these two important skills and their relation. While this research appears to be positively conclusive, there have not been many studies that combine using paragraph writing to support speaking along with the progressive use of CSs.

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