

# Research on Communicative Strategies in Second Language Acquisition

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**Abstract:** In recent years, with the rise of China and the acceleration of globalization, the craze for Chinese language has reached an unprecedented height. Communicative strategies play an increasingly important role in improving second language learners' communicative abilities and have been widely studied by Chinese and foreign scholars. By analyzing and studying the definition, types and influencing factors of communicative strategies, its implications for international Chinese education can also be summarized.

**Keywords:** Communication; Strategy; International; Chinese.

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## 1. Introduction

With the development of China's economy and the continuous enhancement of comprehensive national strength, international Chinese education has also made great progress. Many countries have opened Chinese courses, and our country has also established Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in many countries around the world. In the international Chinese teaching community, research on communicative strategies when teaching Chinese as a second language has just begun, and the research results are few and unsystematic. The term "communicative strategy" was first proposed by Selinker in an article discussing interlanguage issues published in 1972. Relevant foreign research began in the 1970s: Selinker (1972) first proposed the term communicative strategy, and Tarone (1977) first proposed the definition and classification of communicative strategies. Canale & Swain (1980) proposed the model of communicative competence, which greatly promoted the research on communicative strategies. "In the 1990s, the three monographs published by Bialystok (1990), Poulisse (1990) and Kasper & Kellerman (1997) became the latest results, and empirical research also shifted to a micro perspective that affects the use of strategies." [1] About communicative strategies, the study of them in foreign language teaching in China started relatively late. "Since the 1990s, scholars have gradually begun to dabble in and introduce the theory of international diplomacy." [2] As a component of communicative ability, communicative strategies are very important to second language or foreign language learners because they can ensure learning Communicate smoothly despite insufficient language knowledge.

## 2. Definition of Communicative Strategies

learners adopt to overcome communication barriers when they encounter situations where certain information cannot be expressed due to limited language resources." [3] Since the 1970s, linguists have Define communicative strategies from two perspectives .Scholars who define it from a communicative perspective believe that communicative strategy is a means of making up for the difference in

language knowledge between second language learners and speakers in actual communication situations ; while linguists who define it from a psycholinguistic perspective believe that communicative strategies are the psychological phenomena underlying specific linguistic behaviors . Influential definitions of communicative strategies from a communicative perspective are as follows: Corder proposed in 1977 that communicative strategies refer to the systematic techniques used by speakers when they encounter certain difficulties in expressing meaning. Stern proposed in 1983 that communicative strategies are skills for solving difficult problems when communicating in a second language that has not yet been fully mastered; and the communicative strategy proposed by Bialystok in 1990 is a strategy adopted by communicators purposefully and consciously in order to solve difficulties in second language or foreign language communication. The typical definition of communicative strategies from the perspective of psycholinguistics is as follows : In 1980 , Tarone defined communicative strategies as the mutual agreement that conversationalists try to reach on meaning when they do not have the language structure required to express meaning ; in 1983, Faerch & Kasper proposed that communicative strategy is a subconscious plan used by someone when they encounter difficulties that cannot be solved in completing a specific communication purpose. And in 1985, Ellis defined communicative strategy as part of the language user's communicative ability. It is a psychological language plan that is subconscious. The learner can use it as a substitute for a certain expression plan that cannot be completed. Although linguists have different definitions, they generally contain the following two pieces of information: First, the language expresser encounters unexpressable words in communication and needs to use other methods to continue the communication. Second, when using communicative strategies, the language expresser is conscious.

## 3. Types of Communicative Strategies

Linguists define communicative strategies from different perspectives, so inconsistent definitions will inevitably lead to different classifications of communicative strategies. Some scholars classify communicative strategies according to different communication methods. Bialystok classifies communicative strategies according to their linguistic origin.

In his opinion, the biggest advantage of using this method to classify communicative strategies is that it is easy for people to understand the role of different communicative strategies. Because generally speaking, in communication between learners and native speakers, communicative strategies based on the target language are more effective than communicative strategies based on the mother tongue. Corder divides communicative strategies into message adjustment strategies and resource expansion strategies. So far, according to the application of communicative strategies, we can find that there are different types of communicative strategies. In this article, we focus on two more widely used communicative strategies. According to Tarone, Farch and Kasper, the two communicative strategies are avoidance strategies and achievement strategies.

### **3.1. Avoidance Strategies**

Avoidance strategy means that a person is aware of the existence of conflict, but he is more willing to avoid or suppress the conflict through non-cooperation than to protect his own interests. When we communicate with others, we often choose an easier or more familiar word instead of a difficult or unknown word because we may not know how to say a word or how to express a sentence structure. The characteristics of the avoidance strategy are as follows: first, it is not cooperative, and second, it is not arbitrary. More importantly, it has no requirements on itself or others. Finally, ignoring and releasing a problem denies that it is a problem. Therefore, its disadvantage is that it can maintain equilibrium for a short period of time, but it does not solve the problem in the end. Avoidance strategies can be used when things are unimportant, or the losses caused by the conflict are greater than the benefits brought by solving the problem.

### **3.2. Achievement Strategies**

Achievement strategies refer to strategies that the speaker uses to eliminate obstacles when his expression is not smooth and encounters obstacles. Generally speaking, achievement strategies are considered an initial communicative strategies. Through achievement strategies, learners try to solve communication problems by expanding their communicative resources. Similar to avoidance strategies, achievement strategies can also be divided into two categories. Communicators mainly try to complete communication and increase their sense of accomplishment through compensation strategies and retrieval strategies. Compensation strategies are divided into cooperative strategies and non-cooperative strategies. Strategies that complete communication with the cooperation of the listener are called cooperative strategies. Conversely, strategies that do not rely on the other party are called non-cooperative strategies. Retrieval strategies are mainly realized through information search and memory transformation. Learners recall memories by waiting, using semantic fields, using other languages and other means to find useful information in order to overcome communication difficulties and continue communication smoothly.

## **4. Factors Influencing Communicative Strategies**

The use of communicative strategies involves many factors, including language level, learning environment and communicative tasks, etc.

### **4.1. Target Language Level**

The first factor that determines the choice of a certain communicative strategy is the language ability of the learner. Several studies have successfully explored the relationship between learners' second language proficiency and their choice of communicative strategies. Tarone points out that strategy preferences and second language proficiency are related. Ellis (1983) also acknowledged that the learner tends to use more reduction strategies early on but turns increasingly to achievement strategies as he progresses. The foreign language proficiency of learners directly affects the choice and use of communicative strategies. Research by Tarone and Ellis both found that students with lower proficiency prefer to choose reduction strategies and are unwilling to use success strategies. Learners often choose reduced types of communicative strategies at the initial stage. As their language proficiency continues to improve, they gradually begin to use achievement strategies. Ellis's research shows that there is no essential difference in the choice of strategies between English-learning children and native English-speaking children, but there is only a quantitative difference. The former relies more on avoidance strategies, while the latter relies more on paraphrasing. Bialystok's research found that upper-level students used more foreign language-based strategies, while lower-level students chose native-language-based communicative strategies.

### **4.2. Learning Environment**

Many studies have shown that second language learners' use of communicative strategies is affected by the learning environment. For example, learners may use fewer strategies in a classroom setting than in a natural setting. Learners are more likely to use communicative strategies in natural environments (such as society), but less frequently in fixed environments (such as classrooms). The learning environment also has an impact on the use of communicative strategies. Learners use communicative strategies more in natural environments, but rarely use communicative strategies in formal classroom teaching environments, especially when the focus of teaching is not to emphasize communicative fluency, but to correct students' language use errors. When it is up, the strategy is used less. In addition, the learning environment has an impact on which strategy is chosen. Piranian's (1979) study found that paraphrasing strategies are more commonly used in natural communication outside the classroom in American universities.

### **4.3. Personality**

The third factor that affects the choice of communicative strategies is the learner's personality. There is a close relationship between the learner's personality and the choice of communicative strategies. Therefore, learners with different personalities have different choices of communicative strategies. Regarding the influence of learners' personality on the use of communicative strategies, relevant experiments have proved that: when learners with extroverted personality retell stories in a foreign language, they speak quickly and miss more content, while learners with gentle personality speak more slowly during the retelling process. It's slow but detailed.

### **4.4. Gender**

Early research showed that phonological, morphological and morphological forms are mainly used by people of one

gender, and later research further confirmed that this is reflected at the syntactic, stylistic and sociopragmatic levels. Women's speech differs from men's in many ways. Women's intonation patterns are full of variety, while men's intonation patterns are relatively monotonous compared to women's. Furthermore, women tend to use language forms and accents that are closer to standard forms than men. Furthermore, when they communicate with others, they are different on topics.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, there are many other factors that affect the choice of communicative strategies, such as cognitive style, learner's learning attitude, cultural background, learner's age, native language, and interests. It should be noted that it is not just one factor that affects the choice of communicative strategies, but the interaction of all factors.

## **5. Enlightenment of Communicative Strategy Research on International Chinese Education**

### **5.1. Cultivate Students' Awareness of the Correct Use of Communicative Strategies**

Teachers can start from the various influencing factors of communicative strategies to improve students' sensitivity and recognition of communicative strategies, so that students can realize that in addition to language ability, the use of communicative strategies will also affect oral communication to a great extent. The correct use of communicative strategies can make up for the lack of language knowledge to a certain extent. Teachers should let students understand the functions and types of communicative strategies, and how to choose corresponding strategies for different situations, and encourage them to boldly try to use various strategies in oral communication.

### **5.2. Help Students Create More Natural Communication Environments for Chinese**

The classroom should be student-centered, focus on the cultivation of language application ability, create situations for students to communicate naturally in the target language, and provide targeted guidance according to students' language proficiency at different levels. After class, we can help students carry out a variety of English language learning activities, such as oral corners, speech contests, drama performances, etc., to help students create a general atmosphere for English communication; they can also guide students to use rich network resources to communicate with

foreign friends, let students develop the habit of consciously using Chinese for communication.

### **5.3. The Primary Goal of Teachers' Use of Words Should be to Stimulate Students' Willingness to Communicate in the Second Language**

Teachers should pay attention to the authenticity, diversity and understandability of their words when using them, try to provide students with positive evaluations and feedback, and strive to maximize students' learning enthusiasm and make students willing to communicate in a second language. Only when students' willingness to communicate in the second language is enhanced can the communicative and social functions of language teaching be realized.

## **6. Conclusion**

The main contribution of communicative strategies is to keep the communication channel open. Although the learner may not get the specific structure he needs, he will definitely gain other things. Therefore, communicative strategies can help expand resources and are one of the main ways for learners to maintain progress. Therefore, in the process of second language acquisition, we should focus on cultivating students' communicative strategic abilities and provide more opportunities and a better environment to help them improve their strategic abilities. In international Chinese education, teachers should cultivate students' awareness of the correct use of communicative strategies and help students create more natural Chinese communication environments. In addition, the primary goal of teachers' use of words should be to stimulate students' willingness to communicate in the second language.

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