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# The Relationship between Communication Strategies and Noticing Function of Output Hypothesis in Teacher Talk

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## Abstract

*Purpose of the Study:* The present study, building upon communication strategies research and noticing function of output hypothesis, examines the relationship between these two issues in teacher talk.

*Method:* Five Iranian EFL teachers along with the students in their classes participated in this study. To collect the required data for this study, two steps were taken. First, the researcher observed the classrooms as a non-participant and made audio-recordings from three lessons of each teacher. Second, a single semi-structured interview session was conducted with each teacher.

*Results:* The results showed that whether the teacher notices his linguistic gaps and uses communication strategies to deal with his linguistic problems but this noticing does not lead to any reaction on the part of the teacher; or the communication strategy is not noticed by the teacher that is in apparent contrast to Swain's noticing function of output hypothesis.

*Keywords:* Communication strategies, Output hypothesis, Noticing function, Iranian EFL teachers, Linguistic gaps

## Introduction

The study of second/foreign language communication strategies (CSs) has a respectably long history in the field of second/foreign language acquisition. Since the

publication of the classic collection of papers on CSs in Faerch and Kasper's (1983a) book, language educators in many different contexts have always been interested in how second/foreign language learners make use of their linguistic repertoire in order to fill gaps in their efforts to communicate in foreign languages. Although there is not a consensus among researchers on the definition of CSs, Bialystok's (1990) definition will provide us with an insight into the nature of CSs. She asserts that native and non-native speakers of any language sometimes attempt to find appropriate expressions and/or grammatical constructions when struggling to communicate their meaning. Here, a gap is created between what the individual wants to communicate and the immediately available linguistic resources. The ways in which he/she tries to fill the gap are known as CSs. More specifically, "communication strategies are potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal" (Faerch & Kasper, 1983b, p. 36).

The importance of CSs relies on two aspects: first, they are an invaluable means of dealing with communication trouble spot, such as when a speaker doesn't know a particular word or misunderstands the other speaker. Second, these strategies can also enhance fluency and help to the efficiency of communication. Knowing such strategies is particularly useful for L2 speakers, who frequently experience such difficulties in conversation, because they may provide them with a sense of security in the language by allowing extra time and room to maneuver. Generally, it is argued that the application of foreign language CSs is viewed as one vehicle for promoting greater success in EFL contexts.

Of particular relevance to CSs study is Swain's output hypothesis, especially its noticing function which states that language production enables learners to notice the gap between what they can say and what they want to say when they formulate the target language (notice that this definition is the same as the Bialystok's definition stated above). In other words, Swain (1995) believes that output gives rise to noticing. She states, "to test this hypothesis (function), one would need to demonstrate that learners may, on occasion, notice a problem (even without external cueing) through, for example, implicit or explicit feedback provided from an interlocutor about problems in the learners' output" (p. 129). She further asserts,

> It seems to me that there is ample evidence from the *communication strategy* literature (for example, Tarone, 1977; Faerch & Kasper, 1983a; Bialystok, 1990; Kellerman, 1991) that learners do notice problems as they speak, and do try to do something about them (p. 129; emphasis added).

The main reason underlying our focus on the noticing function of output in the present study is its important theoretical and pedagogical implications. Theoretically, the noticing function of output is closely related to the issue of CSs in second language acquisition (Swain, 1995). Pedagogically, a fair amount of research has taken into account and tested student output and its noticing function (e.g., Iwashita, 2001; Izumi, 2002; Izumi & Bigelow, 2000; Izumi et al., 1999; Pica et al., 1996; Shehadeh, 1999, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; Van den Branden, 1997) but no study has already dealt with this notion in teacher talk, generally, and non-native English teachers, specifically. In spite of the fact that the investigation of teacher talk within classroom discourse has been the focus of much attention for a number of years, it is still only partially understood. In recent years, the second language classroom has been characterized as an on-going and complex series of interrelated contexts, in which teacher talk is seen as being central to teaching and learning. Our understanding of this issue can only be advanced once we identify meaningful ways of investigating teacher talk within classroom discourse.

It should be noted that when we are talking about teachers, we are concerned with EFL teachers and we believe that these teachers' job is more difficult in comparison with their native English colleagues. Since most of these teachers have obvious deficiency of linguistic knowledge, they have another responsibility except their natural duty (teaching), that is learning (improving) language on their own. Metaphorically, non-native English teachers are potential learners that are teaching to other learners. As Anani Sarab (2004, p. 2) states, "In handling communication problems, teachers – like any speaker – are probably constantly planning ahead, making on-line adjustments and monitoring or responding to problems as they become manifest".

Considering the Swain's claim, it seems that output hypothesis and its noticing function is applicable to non-native English teachers' research, specifically to the use of CSs in their talk. In other words, it seems that there is a relationship between noticing function of output hypothesis and CSs. This study is, therefore, an attempt to shed some

light on this issue by asking the following questions: is noticing function true for non-native English teachers (as it is for learners)? What happens when (if at all) these teachers notice their linguistic gaps?

## Review of Literature

Generally, there have been two different groups in approaching CSs. The first group tries to propose additional categories, maintain and expand existing taxonomies (e.g., Tarone et al., 1976). The second group denies the value of existing taxonomies and is always trying to reduce the number of categories of analysis (e.g., The Nijmegen Group). Yule and Tarone (1997), for ease of reference, call the proponents of the first group "the pros" since they are profligate in their liberal expansion of categories and the proponents of the second group "the cons" since they are rather conservative, given their emphasis on parsimony. Proponents of the first approach deal with the external and interactional perspective of learners (e.g., Varadi, 1973; Tarone et al., 1976; Tarone, 1983; and Corder, 1983); but advocates of the second approach take the internal and cognitive processes of learners into account (e.g., Faerch & Kasper, 1983b; Bialystok, 1990; and the Nijmegen Group). However, it should be noted that these all are superficial manifestations of two divergent theoretical perspectives, namely, interactional (sociolinguistic) and psycholinguistic. Due to their importance in CSs research, a brief review of the studies of the leading scholars of these two opposing theoretical manifestations is represented in the following.

Varadi (1973; but published in 1983) gave a talk at a small European conference which is considered the first systematic analysis of strategic language behavior. This talk dealt with message adjustment in particular and was deeply rooted in Error Analysis. Briefly, Tamas Varadi's classic paper, "Strategies of Target Language Communication: Message Adjustment", establishes a model of interlanguage production which focuses on the strategies the learner employs when he experiences a "hiatus" in his interlanguage repertoire and he believes "the question of how close the learner comes to communicating what he wanted to say must not be disregarded" (p. 80). He then offers a schematic view of the communication process of target language learners which takes into account the implications of this criterion. In order to adjust his message to his communicative resources, the learner either replaces the meaning or form of his intended message by using

items which are part of his interlanguage, or he reduces his intended message on either the formal or the functional level. This model was tested out in a pilot study involving adult Hungarian learners of English at the intermediate level and the experiment confirmed the hypothetical model of adjustment strategies.

In another study, Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976) defined communication strategy "as a systematic attempt by the learner to express or decode meaning in the target language, in situations where the appropriate systematic target language rules have not been formed" (p. 5). They established the first systematic classification of communication strategies and based their CSs typology on data from nine subjects. Several distinct types of communication strategies which were for the most part observable in the various domains of language (phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical) were discussed and illustrated. These strategies involved transfer from native language, overgeneralization, prefabricated pattern, overelaboration, epenthesis, and avoidance (also divided into sub-categories). Their taxonomy is still seen as the most important in the field since most of the following taxonomies relied on it.

The relationship between CSs and meaning-negotiation mechanisms, for the first time, was presented by Tarone (1983), according to which CSs, "relate to a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared" (p. 65). This definition is potentially broader than Tarone et al.'s (1976) earlier one. It represented an interactional perspective. In other words, CSs are seen as tools used in a joint negotiation of meaning where both interlocutors are attempting to agree as to a communicative goal. This interactional perspective covered various repair mechanisms, which Tarone considered CSs if their intention was to clarify intended meaning rather than simply correct linguistic form.

Finally, Corder's (1983) survey, "Strategies of Communication", represents a markedly different way of defining CSs. According to Corder, CSs are used by a speaker when faced with some difficulty due to his communicative ends outrunning his communicative means. In other words, communicative strategies "are a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his meaning when faced with some difficulty" (p. 16). He proposes two options for appointing CSs to different types: either the speaker tailors the intended message to his linguistic resources or manipulates the available

linguistic competence in order to make it consistent with the intended meaning. Corder calls the strategies produced by the first option "message adjustment strategies" and those by the second, "resource expansion strategies".

Most of the research conducted on CSs up to the second half of the 1980s share one thing: namely, they follow a primarily linguistic approach to defining CSs (Dornyei & Scott, 1997). Instead of conducting product-oriented research, Faerch and Kasper (1983b), Bialystok (1990) and the Nijmegen Group recommended CS research adopt a new analytic perspective, focusing on the cognitive "deep structure" of strategic language behavior. In other words, these researchers consider CSs as mental plans implemented by the second language learner in response to an internal signal of an imminent problem, a form of self-help that does not have to engage the interlocutor's support for resolution. In Kellerman's (1991) conclusion,

> The systematic study of compensatory strategies has not been properly served by the construction of taxonomies of strategy types which are identified on the basis of variable and conflicting criteria which confound grammatical form, incidental and inherent properties of referents, and encoding medium with putative cognitive processes. This inconsistency has led to a proliferation of strategy types with little regard for such desirable requirements as psychological plausibility, parsimony and finiteness (p. 158).

The intraindividual, psycholinguistic view locates CSs either in models of speech production (Faerch & Kasper, 1983b) or cognitive organization and processing (Bialystok, 1990 and the Nijmegen Group).

In this way, Faerch and Kasper (1983b) adopted, for the first time, a psycholinguistic approach to CSs and attempted to distinguish strategies from processes, procedures, plans, tactics, etc. From this perspective, CSs are located within a general model of speech production, in which two phases are identified, the planning phase and the execution phase. They found that in the planning phase, language learners retrieve items from the relevant linguistic system. The product of the planning process is a plan that controls the execution phase. The execution phase consists of neurological/physiological processes. When non-native speakers of a target language encounter a problem during the course of communication, due to the lack of linguistic knowledge at either the planning or the

execution phase of speech production, they produce a plan to overcome the problem. Communication strategies are part of this planning phase and are utilized when learners are prevented from executing their original plan because of some problem. Similar to Tarone's criteria, learners may choose avoidance by changing their original goal through some sort of "reduction" strategy. Alternatively, they may maintain their original goal through a substitute plan. This is referred to as an "achievement" strategy.

Bialystok (1990), another psycholinguistic researcher, believes that although considerable progress has been made through different approaches, the ultimate goal of integrating the observations into a coherent account of speech production has not been realized. According to Bialystok, the only solution to this problem is an approach based on the process of using language for communicative purposes. In this way, Bialystok's alternative cognitive framework of CSs is based on two cognitive skills: *analysis of knowledge* and *cognitive control*. Analysis of knowledge is defined as the ability to make some kind of alteration to the message content by exploiting knowledge of the concept. Strategies employed to accomplish this may include providing a definition of a concept or object, or engaging in circumlocution. Cognitive control refers to the manipulation of the method of expression by integrating resources from outside the L2 in order to communicate the intended message. Strategies employed to accomplish this may include use of the L1 or non-linguistic strategies such as miming.

Perhaps the most extensive series of studies to date into CSs was undertaken by the Nijmegen project throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Dornyei & Scott, 1997). The Nijmegen Group researchers (i.e., Kellerman, Bongaerts, and Poulisse) also approached CSs from a psycholinguistic perspective and chiefly concerned with investigating a subset of CSs called "compensatory strategies". In the Nijmegen model, compensatory strategies will be one of two types, *conceptual* or *code* compensatory strategies (Kellerman & Bialystok, 1997). Conceptual strategies are those whereby the participant manipulates the concept of the target referent in an effort to explain the item and is consistent with Bialystok's notion of analysis of knowledge. Linguistic or code compensatory strategies are those where learners manipulate their linguistic knowledge.

Yule and Tarone (1997) summarize the duality of approaches taken by researchers – the "Pros" following the traditional approach and the "Cons" taking a primarily psychological stance – as follows:

> The taxonomic approach of the Pros focuses on the descriptions of the language produced by L2 learners, essentially characterizing the means used to accomplish reference in terms of the observed form. It is primarily a description of observed forms in L2 output, with implicit inferences being made about the differences in the psychological processing that produced them. The alternative approach of the Cons focuses on a description of the psychological processes used by L2 learners, essentially characterizing the cognitive decisions humans make in order to accomplish reference. It is primarily a description of cognitive processing, with implicit references being made about the inherent similarity of linguistically different forms observed in the L2 output (p. 19).

**A New Approach to Dealing with CSs**

Following Yule and Tarone's (1991) claim that for a comprehensive understanding of strategic communication, attention needs to be paid to "both sides of the page", i.e. to the actions of both learners and interlocutors, scholars, such as Firth and Wagner (1996; also Wagner & Firth 1997), have tried to describe strategic communication as an interactive activity. In these studies, CSs are analyzed as elements of the ongoing and co-constructed context of the interaction and their communicative function is established by taking into account the actions of all the conversational participants, not only students. It does not need just be the L2 student who is felt to have inadequate linguistic knowledge in classroom interaction (it may be the teacher; Rampton, 1997). As Willems (1987, p. 354) asserts "all of us [teachers] – and not just our pupils – have a natural tendency to use communication strategies when communication problems arise".

The latter argument is of particular importance in EFL classroom contexts where non-native English teachers are performing their duties. It is interesting to know that many language teachers are themselves second/foreign language speakers and lag behind their linguistic knowledge. These teachers' talk can reveal and make explicit to a large extent the conditions and consequences of teaching and learning principles in classroom contexts. In this way, Cullen (1998, p. 179) asserts,

> while the question of how much teachers talk is still important, more emphasis is given to how effectively they are able to facilitate learning and promote communicative interaction in their classroom through, for example, the kind of questions they ask, the speech modifications they make when talking to learners [such as communication strategies], or the way they react to student errors.

Thus, the importance of teacher talk relies on two aspects: first, its role as a source for L2 learning; second, its role as a key interactional constituent of the language learning context. Anani Sarab (2004, p. 1) believes,

> The implications [of teacher talk] are of interest generally in contemporary language teaching, and of course for teacher education and teacher development. This interest is motivated by the growing recognition of the role of teacher talk in determining the patterns of interaction and in effect the learning opportunities provided for the learners. The consensus is that through the investigation of teacher talk and classroom interaction we can come to a better understanding of the teaching-learning process.

Thus, although teacher talk has been of considerable interest in understanding and attempting to develop second language teaching pedagogy, little attention has been paid to teachers, especially a very significant aspect of teacher talk that is CSs. This paper is an attempt to deal with this important, and neglected, feature of teacher talk and its relation to the noticing function of output hypothesis.

**The Rationale for Adopting Noticing Function**

In a seminal article, Swain (1985) argued that comprehensible input may not be sufficient for successful second language acquisition (SLA), but that opportunities for non-native speakers to produce comprehensible output are also necessary. In this way, Swain (1985) proposed a hypothesis relating to the second language learner's production comparable to Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis. She termed this hypothesis as the "comprehensible output hypothesis" for SLA. Swain argued that comprehensible output is the output that extends the linguistic repertoire of the learner as he or she attempts to create precisely and appropriately the meaning desired.

More recently, Swain (1995), refining the comprehensible output hypothesis developed in Swain (1985), proposed three different functions of output in SLA. First, it is hypothesized that output promotes "noticing". That is to say, "in producing the target language (vocally or subvocally) learners may notice a gap between what they *want* to say and what they *can* say, leading them to recognize what they do not know, or know only partially" (pp. 125-126). A second way in which producing language may serve the language learning process is through hypothesis testing. That is, "producing output is one way of testing a hypothesis about comprehensibility or linguistic well-formedness" (p. 126). Thirdly, as learners reflect upon their own target language use, their output serves a metalinguistic function, enabling them to control and internalize linguistic knowledge. She states, "my assumption at present is that there is theoretical justification for considering a distinct metalinguistic function of output" (p. 126).

Of several functions of output identified by Swain (1995), we focus in this study on the *noticing/triggering* function due to its relevance to CSs literature. Addressing this function of output, Swain (1995, p. 126) argues that,

> …under some circumstances, the activity of producing the target language may prompt second language learners to consciously recognize some of their linguistic problems; it may bring to their attention something they need to discover about their L2.

A second reason for adopting this function of Swain's output hypothesis is that previous research has predominantly focused on second/foreign language learners' language production and there is no study regarding non-native second/foreign language teachers' language production, particularly testing the noticing function.

## Research Questions

The aim of this study is to shed some light on the question of whether the use of CSs by Iranian non-native English teachers brings about noticing and if it does what happens. More specifically, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

1) Does the use of communication strategies by Iranian non-native English teachers bring about noticing?

2) What does happen if the use of communication strategies by Iranian non-native English teachers brings about noticing?

## Method

### Subjects

In accordance with previous literature on investigating English teachers in language contexts generally (for example, Seedhouse, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1999, 2004; and Walsh, 2002, 2006), and Iranian non-native English teachers in EFL contexts specifically (for example, Farrokhi, 2006 and Anani Sarab, 2004), five EFL teachers along with the students in their classes participated in this study. One class at pre-intermediate level was selected from each teacher. Each class had between 10 to 15 students who were between 14 and 20 years old. All teachers were male, ranging from 1 to 27 years in terms of their experience in teaching EFL. They were between 21 and 47 years old, teaching in two private language institutes in Babolsar, Iran. Three classes of one institute met two times a week with 120-minute sessions each time and two classes of the other institute met two times a week with 90-minute sessions. The teachers were not made aware that the researchers intended to examine how they deal with linguistic gaps in their interlanguage repertoire. They were simply told that the study aimed at investigating general patterns of their talk in the classroom context.

### Data Collection Procedures

According to Seedhouse (2004, p. 87) "classroom research has considered between five and ten lessons a reasonable database". This study rests on a corpus of 15 sessions, a reasonable sample size on which to make generalizations and draw conclusions. The data for the present study were collected from EFL classroom contexts in Iran. To collect the required data for this study, two steps were taken. First, one of the researchers observed the classrooms as a non-participant and made audio-recordings from three lessons of each teacher. The reason for researcher's presence in the classroom as a non-participant observer was that some of the CSs are non-verbal (such as miming) and this fact justifies the researcher's presence in the classroom. The researcher made use of a tape-recorder for making the audio-recordings of the whole class. In addition, an MP3 Player was put near to the teacher in each class both to record whole-class interaction and to capture teacher voice

more clearly. Using the above-mentioned method, 27 hours of naturally occurring data was obtained from the five teachers (3 sessions for each teacher, with 9 sessions lasting about 120 minutes and 6 sessions lasting about 90 minutes) participating in this study.

Second, a single semi-structured interview session was conducted with each teacher. While the interviews were conducted, the conversations were audio-recorded and the researcher took notes. Farsi (the teachers' native language) was used to elicit more information about the teachers' attitudes. Each interview lasted about 15 to 30 minutes. It could be debated that other means would also be feasible to gather such data, such as questionnaires or group interviews. However, due to restrictions in time and teachers' preferences, the researchers decided to conduct a more direct means to gain access to the opinions and experiences of the participants. Interviewing, in this sense, provides a direct route to the data, especially semi-structured interviewing which has a free form in its interactional style and is best suited to exploring the topics associated with the research (Adamson, 2004). Rather than a rigidly structured interviewing style which would limit the interviewer to set questions, the researchers preferred to use semi-structured style to have the ability to change question forms to suit the linguistic or conceptual competence of the interviewees. Yet, another reason for choosing this type of interview, which is used quite widely in applied linguistics research, was that it offered a compromise between the two extremes: although there was a set of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format was open-ended and the interviewee was encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner (Dornyei, 2007). In other words, the interviewer provided guidance and direction, but was also keen to follow up interesting developments and to let the interviewee to elaborate on certain issues.

**Coding and Analysis of the Data**

In order to answer the first research question, the researchers analyzed the audio-recordings of the classroom data. In this way, we first transcribed the data and then identified the CSs in them. The next step in analyzing the data was to develop the categories of analysis for coding the CSs. These different categories of analysis are defined and illustrated in the following. Regarding the second research question, a qualitative analysis was carried out on interviews and lessons which have already been transcribed and

coded. The aim of the analysis was to reveal something about Iranian non-native English teachers' use of CSs and its consequences.

**Coding Communication Strategies**

In order to show the widespread use of CSs and their importance in teacher talk, different types of communication strategy identified in the database of this study were coded into one of the following CS types: 1) approximation, 2) circumlocution, 3) avoidance, 4) miming, 5) appeal for assistance, and 6) code switching. This typology is basically developed based on theoretical considerations (Tarone et al., 1976 and Tarone, 1977), though the categorization is supported by empirical research evidence (Bialystok, 1990). The reason for choosing Tarone's typology is that her taxonomy is still seen as the most important in the field since most of the following taxonomies relied on it (Dornyei & Scott, 1997). The following table gives a detailed view of the results and provides an overall representation of the frequencies of CSs for each teacher.

Table 1

*Distribution of communication strategies across teachers (numbers show the frequencies)*

| CS Types / Teachers | Approximation | Circumlocution | Avoidance | Miming | Appeal for Assistance | Code Switching | Row Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T1 | 40 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 57 |
| T2 | 97 | 11 | 13 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 138 |
| T3 | 19 | 1 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 32 |
| T4 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 |
| T5 | 17 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 |
| Column Total | 190 | 17 | 28 | 9 | 12 | 6 | Grand Total: 262 |

These CSs are defined and exemplified below. The transcripts presented below are based on the standard transcription system. Language has not been corrected and standard conventions of punctuation are not used, the aim being to represent "warts and all" the exchanges as they occurred in the classroom. The only contractions in the following

transcriptions that seem necessary to be defined are T that stands for "teacher", L that stands for "learner" and LL that stands for "several learners at once".

**Approximation**

It is simply the use of a substitute word which shares some of the critical semantic features with the target item. Tarone (1977) identifies this type of CS within the broad category of paraphrase and defines it as "the use of a single target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the learner" (p. 198). Approximation, then, includes virtually all word substitutions that the L2 speaker knowingly employs to serve in place of the more accurate term. The substitute word can refer to the correct concept but at an inappropriate level, such as worm for silkworm, or refer to another object that may give some hint to the intended referent, such as lamp for water-pipe (Bialystok, 1990). The example below from our database illustrates approximation:

Extract 1:

1 T: all right I think most of you finished
2 L: yeah
3 T: Hamed zero point two five is the same as?
4 L: A quarter
5 T: a quarter why did you hang? yes you're in doubt when you say ha? You're in doubt be sure you're true and Hossein eh… zero point three three is the same as?

In this exchange, the teacher is doing a practice from the book in which the students are required to say the equivalents to the teacher's numbers. As he is asking questions, he uses the word "hang" in number 5 that does not seem to be correct based on what he says in the rest of the sentence. In fact, he is expressing the meaning of "surprise". Although this expression is not correct, it semantically conveys the meaning to the students.

**Circumlocution**

This communication strategy is simply defined as the description of the characteristics or elements of the subject or action instead of using the appropriate target language structure. This strategy is also a subtype of paraphrase in Tarone's typology and is

defined as "a wordly extended process in which the learner describes the characteristics or elements of the object or action instead of using the appropriate target language structure" (p. 198). The example Tarone gives from her study is a subject attempting to refer to water-pipe: "she is, uh, smoking something. I don't know what's its name. That's uh, Persian, and we use in Turkey, a lot of". Here the learner is groping for features that may help the listener guess what the intended object might be. Bialystok (1990) gives another example from her study. The following circumlocutions were provided for bench: a little wooden chair, to rest your legs when you are tired, it doesn't have a back. The example below from our database illustrates circumlocution:

Extract 2:

1 T: Interesting such a beautiful stomach ha? all right so what does he do? He eats a sandwich?

2 LL: yeah

3 T: can you read the sentence that is written on the T-shirt?

4 L: Nike /naik/

5 T: Nike? We call it /naiki/

6 L: yeah

7 T: Mr. Danial rude Danial is eating in the class the action is called eh… yes it means eh… use your teeth and eh… make into different slices and eat all right?

In this extract, the teacher is describing a caricature in the book. He suddenly stops teaching and refers to one of the students in number 7 who is chewing gum and it seems that he can not find the appropriate word for his action. In this way, he makes use of circumlocution and describes the characteristics of what he is going to say that is "chewing".

**Avoidance**

L2 speakers sometimes make a deliberate decision not to speak because they expect communication problems to arise. This avoidance is a common strategy for second language speakers, causing them to remain silent simply because some aspect of vocabulary or grammar is not known. Although normally difficult to detect, Tarone's methodology made it clear when a subject was deliberately using an avoidance strategy.

Omitting salient but lexically difficult objects shown in the picture, such as mushroom or water-pipe, was interpreted as evidence of this strategy. Bialystok (1990) believes, "such interpretations were especially well-grounded since each subject also provided descriptions in their native language. Content discrepancies between the two data sets pointed to cases of avoidance" (p. 40).

Tarone refined this strategy by distinguishing between *topic avoidance* and *message abandonment*. For the former, specific topics or words are avoided to the best of the learner's ability. In other words, learners manage to prevent the occurrence of topics that are certain to present difficulties. For the latter, learners stumble into a topic that is too difficult and simply give up and go on to another. The examples below from the database illustrate both of these avoidance strategies:

Extract 3:

1 T: I said we watch movie or I said we read the story? Because we have two or three sessions to finish this term I think eh… we watched a lot we have watched movie a lot eh… so please open your story eh… books to finish it so don't forget to bring your writing next session we will talk about

2 L: This question

3 T: Yes answer these questions please I beg you I talked a lot yeah? So have you ever heard I'm sorry eh… women eh… I forget what do we call it ok so women are women (the teacher laughs) later I will tell you

In this extract, the teacher consciously avoids the topic about women in number 3. The expression "later I will tell you" shows that maybe the teacher finds this topic rather difficult to discuss and, in this way, prefers to avoid it. This extract is an example of the first type of avoidance that is topic avoidance.

Extract 4:

1 T: Which option is it?

2 L: One and a half f

3 T: Yes yes one and a half years old our kids just start saying mama papa but he started to play golf

4 L: When he is nine month…

5 T: Yes he could because he's Tiger
6 LL: (two of the students knock on the door and enter) hello
7 T: Hello some people who have muscles it's hard to eh… you're late why you're late?
8 L: we were coming to Kish Air we were arrested they caught motor bike

In this extract, the teacher is doing an exercise from the book and is talking about a famous golf player. It seems that the teacher is going to say something in number 7 but suddenly leaves the message and continues. This extract is an illustration of the second type of avoidance that is message abandonment.

**Miming**

This strategy includes all non-verbal accompaniments to communication, particularly those that serve in the place of a missing target language word. Tarone's example makes this type of communication strategy more clear. The subject claps his hands to indicate applause. An example of miming is provided below:

Extract 5:

T: yes that time I enemy my enemy was between my my field and I thought that eh… their goal is smaller than us he was cheating and I said hey what do you do? And he said what? What did you say me? Are you shouting at me? And I said yeah what do you think? Who are you? And eh… suddenly eh… he put his legs behind my legs and he pushed me and I felt on the cement on my head exactly I was I was styling in this style (the teacher mimes) then I was converse

In this extract, the teacher is telling a story in the past when he was a kid. As he is talking about his fight with one of his friends, he gestures to show that he was on his back. It seems that the teacher could not find an appropriate word for this action and, therefore, made use of miming to convey his intended meaning.

**Appeal for Assistance**

This type of strategy occurs when the L2 speaker seeks direct or indirect help from one's interlocutor in resolving problems. An appeal for assistance occurs when the L2 speaker consults any source of authority: a native speaker, the experimenter, a dictionary.

This strategy also takes into account other more verbal efforts such as prosodic features like rising intonation which implicitly elicits some assistance or validation from the listener. In other words, there are two kinds of appeal for assistance as follows:

*1) Explicit appeal for assistance:* giving up one's efforts to express meaning and asking the interlocutor to help or using a dictionary.

*2) Implicit appeal for assistance:* disfluency marker realized in one's speech signaling linguistic problems in production.

The examples below are drawn from our own database and take into account both types of appeal for assistance:

Extract 6:

1 L: Excuse me what is فالگوش وایستادن /falgush vaistadan/?

2 T: It means eh… let me check it up (teacher checks it up in a dictionary) eavesdrop overhear listen secretly to a conversation yes? Eavesdropping overhear

In this extract, one of the students asks the meaning of a word in L2. In order to find the answer to this question, the teacher uses his dictionary in number 2. This extract clearly depicts the use of an explicit appeal for assistance by an EFL teacher.

Extract 7:

1 T: Some national what does it mean? It means all of the country it sends they send to all of the country like Jame Jam Iran Etemade Meli but some are eh… it means just in Mazandaran just in Babolsar eh…

2 L: local

3 T: yes it is true local

In this extract, the teacher talks about newspapers in different countries as the class is watching a movie about media. At the end of number 1, the teacher uses a disfluency marker to show that he can not remember the intended word and, in this way, implicitly appeals for assistance. In number 2, one of the students helped him and in number 3, the teacher confirmed that this word was his intended word.

**Code Switching**

This strategy is simply defined as switching to a language other than L2. In Tarone's typology code switching (language switch) is a manifestation of the broader category *conscious transfer*. In her definition, code switch is the straightforward insertion of words from another language. The example below clearly illustrates this type of communication strategy:

Extract 8:

T: let me give you another example and what's it useful for I'm going to teach you the word mooch it's a beautiful word let's learn it look at my example (the teacher writes on the board) are you moocher? You know mooch don't you? You don't know mooch means for example a person who takes money a person who قرض میگیره /qarz migire/ but he never pay it again he never pays pay back you see

This extract is a part of a rather long monologue by the teacher. As the teacher is explaining the meaning of a new word to the students, he resorts to his first language (Farsi) and uses an L1 word that has the same meaning as "borrow" to convey his meaning.

**Results and Discussion**

As it was mentioned earlier, in order to deal with research questions, an especial methodology was designed that relied on two aspects: 1) finding out whether the CSs, regarding an intended meaning, used in one of the sessions occur in the subsequent sessions, and 2) conducting an interview for exploring the effect of CSs on teachers in cases the first aspect fails and the effect of CSs is not clear. In other words, if the teachers repeated any type of communication strategy for conveying an intended meaning in one of the three sessions, it shows that the communication strategy has not been noticed and they have not done any reaction regarding this issue. In the cases in which the communication strategy for conveying an intended meaning does not occur in subsequent sessions, an interview is conducted with the teacher to obtain more information regarding this phenomenon. Meanwhile, in the cases in which the communication strategy occurs in subsequent sessions, an interview is conducted with the teacher to both validate the use of communication strategy by the teacher and obtain more information.

Regarding the first procedure, data show that only three teachers have repeated CSs in subsequent sessions (teachers 2, 3, and 4). The following examples illustrate how these teachers have made use of CSs in their talk:

Extract 9:

1 L: we were coming to Kish Air we were arrested they caught motor bike
2 T: Oh really? Your your motorbike was caught by police?
3 L: Yes
4 L: Why?
5 T: You couldn't پارتی /parti/?
6 L: No

Extract 10:

1 T: look at the drawn painting it's very interesting look one two and three it's it's a normal yeah? but number four
2 LL: (the students laugh)
3 T: is the first one I think really sometimes eh… I don't know what do we call it it means you have eh… three p three p in Iran one of them is money yeah? One of them is you you are rude it means you have good conversation you have good connection to people and the last one is somebody help you yeah? Beyond the story yeah

As extract 9 shows, teacher 2 is confronted with a situation in session 2 in which he doesn't know the intended word (favoritism) in second language and makes use of code switching (that is a type of communication strategy). Extract 10 shows that teacher 2 is again confronted with a situation in session 3 in which he doesn't know the *same word* and, in this way, makes use of another communication strategy that is circumlocution. What do these two extracts tell us? These two extracts indicate that whether the use of communication strategy has not resulted in noticing or if it has resulted in noticing, the teacher has not done anything especial regarding this noticing (i.e., noticing has not resulted in learning). This is obviously in contrast to Swain's (1995) noticing function of output hypothesis which claims that language production enables learners to notice the gap between what they can say and what they want to say when they formulate the target language.

Extract 11:

1 L: Excuse me what is مرتاض /mortaz/?

2 T: Eh… let's say yeah I know some Indian people are jugglers actually like this yes? Woodoers we call woodoers (teacher checks the dictionary)

Extract 12:

1 L: Excuse me last session I asked you مرتاض /mortaz/

2 T: Nowadays I don't know whether I'm coming or going you know? Because I have so many classes believe me or not I want let you know my phone number all right?

In extract 11, a student asks teacher 3 a word (ascetic in L2) in session 2 that he doesn't know and he consequently makes use of a communication strategy that is appeal for assistance (the teacher checks the dictionary) but he can not find the appropriate answer. In session 3 (extract 12), the student again raises the same question and the teacher doesn't know the word for the second time. What can be concluded from these two extracts is that the teacher has obviously noticed the gap (checking dictionary) in the second session but he has not done anything especial regarding this noticing.

Extract 13:

T: read the text what is text? Can you show me text? This is a text (teacher refers to a text in the book) that's nice and number f

Extract 14:

T: ok? Use them use them in sentences an used for a vowel sound an engineer ok? Please write (students do the exercise) ok Naser number b ready?

As extract 13 shows, teacher 4 is confronted with a situation in session 1 in which he doesn't use the intended word (option) and makes use of approximation. Extract 14 shows that teacher 4 is again confronted with a situation in session 3 in which he doesn't use the intended word again and, in this way, makes use of the same communication strategy. Again it seems that whether the use of communication strategy has not resulted in noticing or if it has resulted in noticing, the teacher has not done anything especial regarding this noticing and the same inappropriate word has been repeated.

Generally, it can be concluded that whether: 1) the teacher notices his linguistic gaps and uses CSs to deal with his linguistic problems (as is the case with teacher 3) but this noticing does not lead to any reaction on the part of the teacher and he does not do anything especial regarding this issue or, 2) the communication strategy is not noticed by the teacher (as is the case with teachers 2 and 4) that is in apparent contrast to Swain's (1995) noticing function. In proposing the output hypothesis, Swain (1985) argued that producing the target language may serve as "the trigger that forces the learner to pay attention to the means of expression needed in order to successfully convey his or her own intended meaning" (p. 249). In the same line, learning is believed to be enhanced through the act of producing language, which, by its mechanisms, increases the likelihood that learners become sensitive to what they can and can not say in the target language, which leads to the reappraisal of their interlanguage capabilities. But this research didn't find any support to this claim.

In contrast to the previous teachers, it was not clear from the data whether the other two teachers (teachers 1 and 5) have noticed the linguistic gap due to the use of CSs in their talk or noticing has resulted in any reaction. Thus, one of the researchers conducted an interview with each of them. Teacher 1 in response to this question that what he will do if he is confronted with a situation in which he can not remember or even he does not know the intended word said, "in this situation I prefer to use a synonym". It seems that teacher 1 prefers to use approximation and this fact is clear from Table 1 where he has used approximation more frequently than other types of communication strategy. This teacher also in response to the general question that whether he thinks about or tries to learn the words and structures that he does not know or remember in the classroom said, "I have always tried to learn unknown and difficult words and structures especially those that have happened during my teaching". It seems that this teacher is more conscious about his difficulties in the classroom context since no similar CSs, regarding the same intended meaning, occurred in his speech.

The same two questions were asked from teacher 5. In contrast to teacher 1, teacher 5 in response to the first question said, "I'd prefer to use description and interpretation". Although teacher 5's answer shows that he is more interested in circumlocution, data show that he has used approximation more frequently than any other type of communication strategy. In response to the second question, teacher 5 asserted, "I think teaching is not

static and teachers should not feel themselves free from learning. I have always tried to learn what I don't know". Again it seems that this teacher is also aware of his teaching due to the lack of repeated CSs in his speech.

## Conclusion

Much of the research conducted on CSs has been rather narrow in that it has been conducted almost exclusively using elicitation tasks in laboratory-like settings with unnatural methods and no attention has been paid to the natural context of the classrooms (for example see Varadi, 1973; Bialystok, 1983; Haastrup & Phillipson, 1983; Dechert, 1983; Raupach, 1983; Wagner, 1983; Paribakht, 1985; Jourdain, 2000; Littlemore, 2003; Nakatani, 2006; Maleki, 2007). In other words, researchers have treated CSs as independent and isolated units of analysis, paying little or no attention at all to the interactional context (classroom) in which they are used. Nakatani and Goh (2007, p. 213) contend, "while many studies have been conducted into the use of CSs for negotiation and repairs in research settings, few have explored L2 learners' CS use in actual classroom contexts where learners might use CSs that are quantitatively and qualitatively different from experimental settings".

Thus, due to the lack of understanding of classroom's problems and teacher-student interaction, there has been an increase in the number of investigations of CSs in classroom discourse. In the last few years, new studies have appeared adopting what can be considered as a strictly interactional approach to the description of CS use (Fernandez Dobao & Palacios Martinez, 2007). In this way, while previous studies have presented CSs mainly from an outside researcher's perspective, the aim in this paper was to move the focus to that of classroom contexts, especially Iranian EFL teaching contexts. Furthermore, it was proposed that CSs should be studied in the talk of the most important element of the classroom, that is teacher, and not just second language learners. In spite of the fact that the investigation of teacher talk within classroom discourse has been the focus of much attention for a number of years, it is still only partially understood. In this way, this study was an attempt to enhance our understanding of this issue through investigating CSs in teacher talk within classroom discourse. In addition, this study investigated the relationship between CSs and noticing function of output hypothesis. According to the findings, it

seems that the use of communication strategy does not generally result in noticing and, in the cases it does, teachers do not do anything especial regarding their noticing.

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# Öğretmen Konuşmasında İletişim Stratejileri ve Çıktı Hipotezinin Farketme İşlevi Arasındaki İlişki


## Öz

*Çalışmanın Amacı*: Bu çalışma, iletişim stratejileri araştırmalarına ve çıktı hipotezinin fark etme işlevine dayanarak öğretmen konuşmasında bu iki konu arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir.

*Yöntem*: Beş İranlı İngilizce yabancı dil öğretmeni ve sınıflarındaki öğrenciler bu çalışmaya katılmışlardır. Bu çalışma için gerekli veriyi toplamak amacıyla iki aşama uygulanmıştır. Öncelikle, araştırmacı katılımcı olmayarak sınıfları gözlemlemiş ve her bir öğretmenin derslerinden üç tanesinin sesli kaydını yapmıştır. Daha sonra, her bir öğretmenle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme gerçekleştirilmiştir.

*Sonuçlar*: Sonuçlar, öğretmenin kendi dilbilgisel açığını fark edip dilbilgisel sorunlarını çözmek için iletişim stratejileri kullanıp kullanmasa da bu farkındalığın öğretmen tarafından herhangi bir tepkiye neden olmadığını göstermiştir. İletişim stratejisi öğretmen tarafından fark edilmemiştir ki bu da Swain'in çıktı hipotezindeki fark etme işlevine ters düşmektedir.


*Anahtar Kelimeler:* iletişim stratejileri, çıktı hipotezi, fark etme işlevi, İranlı İngilizce yabancı dil öğretmenleri, dilbilgisel açıklar