Communication strategies

Learning and teaching how to manage oral interaction

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The bilingual (Italian and English) website *Learning Paths – Tante Vie Per Imparare* (www.learningpaths.org), by Luciano Mariani, is specifically devoted to learning and teaching styles and strategies, motivation, beliefs and attitudes, and learner autonomy. It offers papers, questionnaires, on-line demonstrations of strategy use, materials for teachers and students, lesson plans, bibliographies and links. E-mail: luciano.mariani@iol.it

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N.B. Strategy numbers refer to the typology in 2.6

Introduction

"The easiest way to give the impression of having a good accent or no foreign accent at all is to hold an unlit pipe in your mouth, to mutter between your teeth and finish all your sentences with the question: "isn't it?" People will not understand much, but they are accustomed to that and they will get a most excellent impression."
George Mikes, *How to Be an Alien*

What is this book about?

Communication strategies is a book about the verbal and non-verbal ways and means that speakers and listeners employ in oral interaction in a second or foreign language (L2), when they have to face problems due to their lack or insufficient knowledge of the linguistic, communicative and cultural codes of the L2. Finding a way to express the meaning of a word that we don't know in the L2, asking our interlocutor to help us if we don't understand, using "tactics" to gain time when listening or speaking are all examples of such strategies.

In addition to helping people cope with problems, communication strategies can play an important role in enhancing the quantity and quality of interpersonal and intercultural interaction: they can thus assist people in such sensitive areas as opening and closing conversations, keeping a conversation open, managing turn-taking, apologizing if one has said or done something inappropriate.

The primary aim of communication strategies is to help language learners and users "not give up" in the face of problems (Hatch 1978: 434), enabling them to exercise more control on interaction, to deal effectively with uncertainty in linguistic and intercultural contacts, and to increase their personal autonomy in learning and using a language.

Who is the book for?

Communication strategies is both a manual for teachers, teacher trainers and educators, providing them with a sound theoretical and methodological background, and a collection of activities for learners and users of an L2

(although L1 learners and users will find valuable insights too). These activities are best carried out by learners working in pairs or small groups under the supervision of a teacher, but they can also be useful to learners studying on their own, providing they can work with a friend or group of friends.

The level at which the activities are pitched is lower intermediate upwards, i.e. Level B1 and above of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001). However, some of the activities can be adapted for a lower level by changing their linguistic content. In the same way, although the activities are designed with teenagers and young adults in mind, they can be adapted for use with younger learners; and the fact that the activities are presented in English does not prevent them from being used with learners of other languages, again by adapting the linguistic content.

How is the book organized?

Part One is a methodological background to communication strategies, focusing on strategy definitions and classifications, raising an awareness of the benefits and problems associated with their use, and providing a rationale for their learning and teaching. It is strongly advised that teachers read this part, as it provides them with an insight into the value and use of strategies and the motivation to engage their learners in strategy education. Part One includes a proposed typology of communication strategies (see 2.6), which the activities in Part Two set out to practise.

Part One also offers tasks in which readers are invited to analyze strategies, reflect on their own experience as language learners and teachers, and express their view on the arguments that are put forward for discussion. Each chapter ends with a *Further reading* section giving details of additional resources related to the topics covered in the chapter.

Part Two consists of the actual learner education activities. These are provided as an open range of tasks which teachers should feel free to select, adopt, adapt or change according to the needs of their learners and the features of the context in which they work. A list of the activities and the strategies they are meant to practise can be found in the table of contents; more detailed instructions for their use are given at the beginning of Part Two.

Some of the tasks and activities in both Part One and Part Two are accompanied by recordings of native and non-native speakers of English. Although they are not essential for the successful completion of the tasks and activities, their use is strongly recommended. The recordings, which are signalled by the symbol CS1 , can be freely downloaded in MP3

format from the Author's web site at the following address: *www.learningpaths.org/communication* . The relevant transcripts are printed at the appropriate places in the book.

An on-going project

Communication strategies is closely linked with the already mentioned Author's web site *www.learningpaths.org*, which is specifically devoted to the issues this book deals with: learning and teaching styles and strategies, motivation, beliefs and attitudes, and learner autonomy. Readers surfing this site will find papers, questionnaires, on-line demonstrations of strategy use, materials for teachers and students, lessons plans, bibliographies and links.

Communication strategies is not just a book – it is also an on-going project involving all those who wish to help themselves and others to learn. Please consider sharing your views and experiences with the Author as well as with other readers of this book.

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PART ONE

METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1 Communication strategies: defining the area

1.1 Introducing strategies

TASK 1

You are talking to someone, either in your native language (L1) or in a second or foreign language (L2).
What do you do if …

- you don't know the exact word for an object?
- you aren't sure you have understood what your partner has just said?
- you want to change the topic of the conversation?

Do you think you would behave differently if you were using your L1 *or* an L2? Why/Why not?

Communication strategies are the ways and means we employ when we experience a problem in communication, either because we cannot say what we would like to say or because we cannot understand what is being said to us. The source of the problem could be linguistic (i.e. we lack the necessary knowledge of the language), cultural (i.e. we are not aware of or can't cope with the cultural demands of the situation) or even contextual (i.e. someone or something makes it difficult for us to follow a conversation, e.g. because of a very noisy environment or the particular way our partner articulates her or his speech).

When such problems occur, we usually try to cope with the situation by making use of all the means which are available to us: we try to make the best possible use of the (little) language that we know; we use non-linguistic means like gestures; we ask our partner to help us; we switch to our L1 – or we may give up the effort altogether and bring the conversation to a stop or start a new one. Thus, in the sample situations in Task 1 we could for instance

- define or describe the object as best as we can, draw it or point to it if it is present;

- tell our partner that we haven't understood and ask her/him to repeat, explain, speak slowly;
- wait for our partner to finish her/his turn of the conversation or interrupt her/him at the appropriate moment by using polite expressions like *Oh, by the way … Now, that reminds me of …*

Strategies like these are by no means an exclusive feature of communication in a foreign or second language – problems can and do occur in native-language communication too, and can be managed by using the same basic types of strategies - although L2 speakers will probably work at a lower level of sophistication than L1 speakers owing to their limited linguistic and communicative competence.

TASK 2

Consider the following examples of interaction between a native speaker (NS) and a non-native speaker (NNS).

- What problem(s) are they experiencing in each case?
- What strategies do they use to manage the problem?
- What other strategies do you think they could use?

1.
NNS: Excuse me?
NS: Yes?
NNS: I need a … a … *tire-bouchon* …
NS: I beg your pardon?
NNS: A … the thing you use to open a bottle of wine …
NS: Ah, you mean a corkscrew?
NNS: Yes, that's right.

2.
NNS: My brother has a shop – he sells … tables, chairs … how do you say that in English?
NS: He sells furniture?
NNS: Furniture, yes, that's it.

3.
NS: Don't turn right at the first junction, take the second on your right, then first left, then left again at the roundabout …
NNS: Er … can you speak slowly, please?
NS: Yes … I said, take the second on your right … then take the second road on your left … and then, when you reach the roundabout, turn left again.

NNS: So … second on the right, then left, and then left again … is that right?
NS: Yes, that's it.

4.
NNS: I'd like two of these … *(points to cakes in the window)*
NS: The chocolate buns?
NNS: No … *(shakes his head and looks to the right)* the white ones …
NS: Oh, the vanilla ones.

5.
NNS: My uncle is going to /s---l/ his boat this weekend.
NS: Oh, has he a sailboat?
NNS: Yes.
NS: Oh, are you going with him?
NNS: Uh – no, he's going to /s---l/ the boat.
NS: Yeah, I understand. Are you going sailing with him?
NNS: No, I'm sorry. /S---l/, not /s---l/. Someone is going to buy his boat.
NS: Oh, he's *selling* the boat! I got it!

Acknowledgment: No. 5 is quoted in Nelson 1989.

Here are some possible answers to the questions in Task 2:

- In (1), the NNS doesn't know the exact word for an object. First, he resorts to another language *(tire-bouchon)* but the NS doesn't follow him. So she builds a definition using a very general word *(thing)* in the phrase *the thing you use to* … and, when the NS supplies the precise word, he confirms *(Yes, that's right).*
- In (2), the NNS doesn't know the word, so he tries to use examples *(tables, chairs …)* instead of the general category (*furniture).* He also explicitly asks the NNS for help *(How do you say that in English?)* and then repeats and confirms the NS's suggestion *(Furniture, yes, that's it).*
- In (3), the NNS can't follow the speed of the NS's talk, so he asks her for help *(Can you speak slowly, please?).* The NS repeats the directions, reducing her speed and adding a few extra words to make the meaning even clearer. The NNS summarizes what he has just heard and asks the NS to confirm *(… is that right?)*, which the NS does.
- In (4), the NNS doesn't know the words for *vanilla buns*, so he first points to them. When the NNS refers to the wrong items (*chocolate* buns), he uses non-verbal language *(shakes his head and looks to the right)* and at the same time adds a description *(the white ones …).*

- In (5), the NNS confuses the pronunciation of *sail* and *sell*. When she realizes that the NNS misunderstands her, she first tries to point this out *(Uh – no)* and repeats the same utterance *(he's going to /s---l/ the boat)*, then, when the NS fails once again to understand, she apologizes *(No, I'm sorry)*, highlights the source of the problem *(/S---l/, not /s---l/)*, and resorts to a reformulation, using the opposite of *sell*, i.e. *buy*.

These examples point to several interesting features of communication strategies, which we will discuss in more length in the following paragraphs:

- communication strategies are used to manage, and possibly solve, a wide range of linguistic (lexical, grammatical, phonological), sociolinguistic or pragmatic, and (inter)cultural problems;
- the person experiencing the problem may try to solve it directly and/or may explicitly appeal to her/his partner for help. However, it is important to note that the problem is usually solved through a *cooperative* action from both partners in the conversation: in the examples above, the NS is willing to repeat, reformulate, supply the missing words, to support the NNS in her/his communicative efforts. In other words, using strategies is by no means a solitary enterprise;
- communication strategies imply the use of both *linguistic* resources (e.g. the native language, the second or foreign language, as well as other known languages) and *extra-linguistic* means (i.e. non-verbal language like gestures, eye contact, facial expressions);
- problems and strategies are not exceptional events in oral interaction but are part of the interlocutors' effort to manage the conversation by constantly negotiating meanings and intentions.

1.2 Focus on oral interaction

Strategies, as ways to manage and solve problems, are a feature of both oral and written language use, of both receptive and productive activities. In *written* and *spoken production* (i.e. writing and producing monologues or speaking to an audience), for example, writers and speakers may use the same sort of strategies we have presented in the previous paragraph: they may use general words (like *thing, stuff*); use synonyms and antonyms; define or describe an object or a concept for which they lack the precise words; as well as reformulate or simplify their text or discourse or even avoid a topic they are not familiar with. Writers and speakers may just as well have recourse to all the languages they know, including their native language; they may use external resources like dictionaries, the Internet or some more competent language user.

In the same way, strategies are an important feature of *aural* (i.e. listening), *visual* (i.e. reading) and *audio-visual* (e.g. watching TV and film) *reception*: for example, language users employ a whole range of inferring

strategies to deduce the meaning of unknown words and expressions; to check comprehension by focusing on specific textual cues; to infer and anticipate intentions and attitudes from the way the text is developed.

In the same way, *mediating* activities (*oral*, like interpretation, or *written*, like translation), as well as the various kinds of paraphrasing and summarizing tasks, both across languages and within the same language, also call for many of the above-mentioned strategies.

However, *oral interaction* (ranging from a friendly conversation to a formal debate, from a casual discussion to a structured interview) has a number of features which distinguish it from all other communicative activities:

- it includes both spoken production (i.e. speaking) and audio-visual reception (i.e. listening and watching): typically, interacting means constantly alternating the roles of speaker and listener, and the resulting discourse can be described as a tightly interwoven tapestry;
- oral discourse is the result of a joint effort to cooperate: two or more interlocutors try to establish some sort of common ground by continually adjusting their mutual positions, with a view to negotiating meanings, intentions and attitudes;
- this process usually takes place in real time, so that interlocutors are faced with heavy cognitive, linguistic and sociocultural demands: they have to make sense of what is being said (decoding messages) while at the same time anticipating their response (encoding messages). This encoding/decoding process is made up of overlapping stretches of discourse, so that a major issue for conversational partners is how to manage the formal properties of oral discourse while negotiating their way towards the fulfillment of their communicative goals;
- strategies are a natural component of this management process. They include the sort of receptive and productive strategies which we mentioned earlier, but also strategies which are typical of the nature of interactive tasks, e.g. turn-taking, opening and closing a conversation, keeping a conversation going, giving feedback, adjusting and repairing messages according to the partner's reaction, asking for and giving help.

Because strategies fulfill a number of different functions, they can be (and have actually been) described in several complementary ways, for instance as *conversational* strategies (although conversations are only a particular example of oral interactive activities), *cooperative* strategies (stressing their collaborative nature), *discourse* strategies (focusing on the actual product of the interaction), *compensation* strategies (highlighting their role in assisting interlocutors to make up for their limited command of the linguistic and sociocultural codes). As we shall see in the following paragraphs, the term *communication strategies* is often used as an "umbrella" term to cover a very wide range of strategies, although it also refers to a clearly identifiable area of psycholinguistic research.

One interesting set of communicative activities, which is rapidly gaining importance in today's tightly connected world, is *written interaction*, which traditionally includes, e.g. correspondence by letter, fax, e-mail (which we might call *offline interaction*), but has expanded dramatically as new technologies have allowed a variety of forms of *online interaction*, such as taking part in chats, blogs, or the various opportunities offered by the so-called social networks. These developments have given rise to unprecedented forms of *written real-time interaction*, which tends to call for and develop a new range of computer-mediated strategies in response to new contexts of language learning and use. The focus of this volume, however, will mainly be on oral interaction, as described above, although one has to keep in mind that today face-to-face interaction is often mediated by the use of technology, as is the case with computer conferences.

1.3 Strategies as problem-solving behaviour

TASK 3

Consider the following definitions of "communication strategies".

- What features do they seem to share?
- What major differences, if any, do you think you could identify?

1. "a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his meaning when faced with some difficulty" (Corder 1983: 16)
2. "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal … not only serve to overcome problems learners face but are also used by learners to create the conditions for intake" (Faerch and Kasper 1983b: 36)
3. "a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared. (Meaning structures here would include both linguistic structures and sociolinguistic rule structures.) … attempts to bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the second language learner, and the linguistic knowledge of the target language interlocutor in real communication situations" (Tarone 1983: 65)
4. "all attempts to manipulate a limited linguistic system in order to promote communication" (Bialystok 1983: 102)
5. "the familiar ease and fluency with which we sail from one idea to the next in our first language is constantly shattered by some gap in our knowledge of a second language. The gap can take many forms – a word, a structure, a phrase, a tense marker, an idiom. Our attempts to

overcome those gaps have been called communication strategies" (Bialystok 1990: 1)

6. "strategies which a language user employs in order to achieve his intended meaning on becoming aware of problems arising during the planning phase of an utterance due to his own linguistic shortcomings" (Poulisse et al. 1984: 72)

Probably the most common, and certainly the most "traditional", view of communication strategies stresses the fact that they are a response to a *problem* in communication. This can apply equally well to phonological, lexical, syntactic, sociolinguistic/sociocultural and pragmatic difficulties, i.e. any aspect of the linguistic system which makes communication hard or even impossible to achieve. This view implies a *deficiency* or *limitation* in the language learner or user, since her/his present level of knowledge is not adequate for the expression of the intended meaning, and this is exactly what prompts her/him to have recourse to a "strategy". This view also implies that strategies become relevant to a language learner or user only insofar as a problem is perceived, i.e. they do not usually play a role, or are indeed relevant, if no problem is encountered. Definition (6) also specifies the phase in oral production when strategies become relevant, i.e. the planning phase (on the actual working mechanism of problem-solving in this context see 2.1). The level of consciousness of the problem, which is referred to as "becoming aware" in definition (6), can vary - and can even be "potential" as in definition (2) – an issue which raises interesting questions (see 1.6).

In contrast to this view, which sees strategies as strictly *individual* plans in response to personal shortcomings, definition (3) focuses on the joint effort of both interlocutors to establish a common meaning, again when the relevant "meaning structures" do not seem to be shared. The "problem", in this view, is seen as a gap between the levels of knowledge of both parties involved, and is managed through a mutual attempt at reaching an agreement. Notice that these "gaps" are most evident in the presence of L2 speakers, although, as we have already mentioned, L1 speakers can also have recourse to strategies since communication problems are not an exclusive feature of situations involving an L2.

As a matter of fact, although problem-orientedness is still a feature of many strategy studies, the very concept of "problem" has widened to include not just the difficulties faced by the *speaker*, leading to her/his own efforts to cope with the situation, but also the perception of difficulties on the *interlocutor*'s part (e.g. her/his own incorrect or ambiguous production or her/his inability to understand), which, once again, may lead to various kinds of negotiated strategies.

Strategies, however, have not been viewed as equivalent to *all* problem-solving devices which can be implemented in oral interaction. Quite a number of research studies have actually considered *problem-management* in communication, and especially negotiation of meaning when problems arise during the development of interaction (i.e. after the planning stage), as a distinct area – with strategies becoming a sort of sub-category within this larger unit of study. As we shall see when we consider the problem of classifying strategies, in practice many taxonomies of communication strategies have in fact included meaning negotiation and repair mechanisms as trouble-shooting and problem-solving mechanisms.

To conclude, it should be stressed that not all researchers have viewed communication strategies as problem-solving behavior: strategies have also indeed been considered as the normal, standard way of managing oral interaction – in a way, all language use could be considered "strategic", in the sense that using a language necessarily implies selecting, from a range of available ways and means, those that are particularly well-suited and functional to the purpose to be achieved. In other words, it is more a problem of adjusting to the situation than merely of "compensating" for a deficiency. Moreover, this view sees strategy use as sensitive to the *context* of the interaction as well as relevant to *all* the interactants and not just as a response to an *individual speaker*'s perception of a problem.

1.4 Communication *vs* compensation

TASK 4

Consider the following items. Would you consider them as "strategies"? Why/Why not?

- Showing interest and willingness to talk
- Getting attention from one's interlocutor
- Introducing a new topic in conversation
- Gaining time to think by using hesitations and "fillers" (like *Aha … Mmm … Well … I see … You know that I mean …*)

In the course of time, the role and scope of communication strategies seem to have widened to include not just a language learner's or language speaker's efforts to cope with problems or to compensate for a limited or insufficient knowledge of the language system, but also more general ways to enhance or make the most of communicative interaction. Strategies have thus become to be seen as plans of action geared at achieving some

communicative goal, e.g. to improve the effectiveness of communication or to manage and possibly solve a social conflict.

In a similar way, communication studies, as well as discourse and conversation analysis, have stressed the role of strategies to manage interactions which may involve potentially difficult or "dangerous" situations. Communicative events normally taking place in oral interactions (e.g. opening and closing a conversation, turn-taking, topic-shifting, interrupting) have thus become to be considered as "strategies", i.e. as concrete steps that a language learner or user can take to increase the level of control over the interaction and thus improve its effectiveness. In this respect, the terms "conversation(al) strategies" and "communication strategies" are often associated and sometimes even overlap, especially in publications targeted at language teachers and learners.

1.5 Product *vs* process

Because early studies of communication strategies were conducted mainly by psycholinguists, the emphasis in strategy description has been mainly on the *linguistic realizations*, i.e. on the actual language *products* that were generated as a result of the effort to cope with a communicative event: for example, the use of synonyms and antonyms as substitutes for an unknown word, the use of definitions and descriptions as a way to paraphrase, the various expressions to obtain the interlocutor's help (like *Can you repeat, please? Can you give me an example?*) or to make sure one has understood or has made oneself understood (like *So you're saying that … is that right?* and *Are you following me?*). As we shall see in later chapters, part of the teaching procedures for strategy education consists of asking students to notice and practise specific linguistic means of realizing strategies in practice.

However, even from this linguistic viewpoint, it was soon recognized that strategies are just the tip of the iceberg, landmarks that point to what a language learner or user is actually doing in her or his mind while struggling to meet the challenge of communication: in other words, strategies can be viewed as "windows on the covert cognitive behavior of the learner, giving us clues as to how the learner is thinking and coping" (Faerch and Kasper 1983b: 35)

In contrast with (or in addition to) this linguistic view, other studies have in fact focused on strategies as *mental procedures*, so that the focus shifts to investigating the cognitive processes that are responsible for the strategic use of language. As a result, the main interest of researchers has turned from the description and classification of strategy types on the basis of their surface, observable features (with a focus on *form*) to the underlying processes and cognitive decisions that are at the basis of strategy use (with a

focus on the unobservable *procedures* that may be inferred from linguistic realizations).

One important consequence of taking the "process view" into consideration is that one is obliged to remember that while strategies are usually inferred by observing and analysing the actual language learners/users' performance, they are at the same time a key to the underlying cognitive processes that generate them. If, for example, a learner uses the general word *animal* instead of the still unknown word *pet*, this could be considered a *strategy* (using hyponyms or general words) – but if the same learner continues to use *animal* when he has also learnt *pet*, then this is probably best viewed not as a strategy but as a *process* (of generalization, with a possible danger of fossilizing, i.e. "freezing" the development of interlanguage).

1.6 The *consciousness* issue

We have already seen that several definitions of strategies involve the idea of an *at least potential* awareness on the part of the language learner or user. The term "consciousness" with regard to strategies is rather ambiguous and lends itself to a series of intriguing questions: is consciousness always a prerequisite for strategy use? What must a learner/user be conscious of (e.g. the problem, the need or wish to solve it, the available alternatives)? At which stages in the process of oral production (e.g. in the phase of planning an utterance, during the actual execution of the plan, or even later, when evaluating one's performance)? Can consciousness play a role after the interaction, e.g. by asking learners/users if they encountered problems and what strategies, if any, they used to cope with them?

One sensible approach to this complex array of questions is certainly to consider consciousness not as an "all-or-nothing" issue, but rather as a continuum, a matter of degree. In other words, speakers can be aware of problems and their solutions, but in very different ways according to the type of problem, the context and the personality of the speakers themselves. For instance, a problem may surface quite clearly just as one starts to plan what to say, or it may emerge later, when one gets feedback from one's interlocutor. The setting in which the interaction takes place may include stress-generating features, like the presence of several new or unknown interlocutors or a particularly difficult topic to discuss, which may trigger anxiety together with a sharp awareness of one's own deficiencies. Individual differences play a crucial role as well: some people, for instance, may be more form-oriented or be prone to monitor the correctness of their performance more than others, which can lead them to be more aware of the difficulties they are facing.

Another factor affecting the consciousness issue is the tendency of some strategies to be used so frequently that they become "routinised" and even "fossilized" and do not seem to be used with any particular degree of consciousness. If a strategy is used in an automatic way as the standard solution to a certain type of problem, can we still call it a "strategy"? One possible way to solve this apparent paradox could be to consider a "strategy" a plan of action which is used in a conscious, intentional way *as well as* a plan of action which the language learner/user can recall and describe, if asked to do so at a later stage. In other words, if he/she cannot recognize or remember the problem and/or cannot recall or describe what she/he did to overcome it intentionally, this particular behaviour cannot be termed as a "strategy". Strategic language use, in other words, implies some degree of recognition of the fact that one is engaging in an effort to overcome a problem in ways that are not "automatic" or are not immediately available as ready-made formulae. Notice that this also points to the personal and even "creative" nature of communication strategies.

1.7 Intra- and inter-cultural strategies

TASK 5

We have argued that communication strategies are relevant both to L1 and to L2 settings, i.e. when interlocutors share the same L1 or when one L2 or more L2s are used in the same interaction. However, there are clearly several major differences in the two situations.

- According to your own experience as an L1 and/or L2 speaker, what are the main sources of differences between an interaction between two native speakers and an interaction in which at least an L2 is involved?
- How do you think different cultures may affect the use of communication strategies in oral interaction?

If we broaden our view of communication strategies beyond the strictly linguistic domain to the sociolinguistic and sociocultural areas, then the meaning and function of strategies also widen considerably. Since these areas naturally focus on the features of the *interaction* between interlocutors rather than on the individual speakers' performance and competence, they tend to highlight the interpersonal, affective and social significance of interaction for those taking part in it, and not just the transfer of information or the negotiation of meaning to create a shared knowledge base. In this view, the "problems" which we have seen to play a major role

in defining the role of strategies in interaction, can even become a springboard for the display of new sets of strategies: it is precisely the inadequate performance of one or more interlocutors that can prompt the interlocutors themselves to recognize their own (as well as each other's) problems and limitations, and to let them become more willing, for example, to show sympathy, to ask for and give help, to improve their reciprocal efforts to continue a conversation – ways to negotiate not just knowledge but also solidarity and support, and opportunities to express the affective potential of strategies. All this can even lead to question and perhaps revise the standard ways in which interactions are usually managed in one's own culture.

This mutual sensitivity to one's interlocutor's problems can be seen as a real recognition of the "other", who can be a member either of one's own culture or of another culture – strategies, in other words, can also be a gateway to an improved intra-cultural and inter-cultural communication. Becoming sensitive to, and of course accepting and respecting *difference*, can then affect the choice of strategies and improve their effectiveness, not just as problem-solving devices in particular situations, but also, and perhaps more importantly, as aids in promoting intra- and inter-cultural dialogue. For instance, if we choose certain words to describe a person or an object, but soon realize that the concepts underlying those words are not shared by our interlocutor, then we might want to change our choice of words, or our strategy altogether, and find other ways to establish some common ground between ourselves and our interlocutor. Both in L1 and in L2 contexts, difference can stimulate new ways of behaving and building relationships: "in activities demanding a versatile use of communication strategies, marginality can be cultivated as a source of pleasure and an expression of friendship in diversity" (Rampton 1997: 293).

Of course, in L1 (*intra-cultural*) encounters speakers can rely on a shared base of socio-cultural assumptions and conventions regarding both the content of what is being communicated and the forms of interaction itself; if conflicts or misunderstandings happen, they also share the accepted strategies to deal with problematic situations, and generally (although certainly not always) achieve some kind of success with the minimum of resources used by both parties. In *inter-cultural* encounters involving the use of one or more L2s speakers do not share the same assumptions and conventions, and this makes interaction, and the management of problems and conflicts, more complex and demanding.

All this also implies that *communication styles*, or the preferred ways to manage interactions, are culturally-sensitive and, therefore, any intercultural encounter necessarily involves some degree of compromise as well as recognition and acceptance of one's interlocutor's cultural communication patterns. In other words, there is no "universal norm" in managing interactions. This has strong implications for strategy choice and use: ways

of taking turns in conversation, holding the floor, interrupting or changing topics, for instance, are all culture-sensitive, and require responsible handling of situations.

On the other hand, it is precisely the nature of intercultural encounters (between a native speaker and a non-native speaker, and, increasingly, between speakers of languages, particularly English, who are *both* non-native speakers) that calls for a range of "mutual adjustment" strategies, in terms of shared or non-shared linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge base. In this view, being a non-native speaker does not imply a negative or inferior status but can even be seen as a resource for the interaction – what is crucial is a mutual recognition of "non-nativeness status" which can offer interlocutors the opportunity to work towards a common communicative goal through the use of adequate "converging" strategies. These must necessarily refer to both the effort to speak the other's language and the effort to adjust one's own language to the actual level of the other.

Further reading

- Basic reference works on communication strategies are Faerch and Kasper 1983a, Tarone and Yule 1989, Bialystok 1990, Poulisse 1990, Kasper and Kellerman 1997.
- For a historical outline of communication strategy research, and for different approaches to conceptualizing them, see Dörnyei and Scott 1997.
- For an extended view of problem-solving in L2 communication, see Dörnyei and Kormos 1998.
- On the similarities and differences in L1 and L2 communication strategies, see Bongaerts and Poulisse 1989.

2 Types of strategies

2.1 Reduction *vs* achievement

In the previous chapter we saw that one way to see communication strategies is to consider them as the ways and means to solve problems which may occur in oral interaction. According to this view, strategies are called into play only if and when people experience a problem. Problems can occur in the learning and use of one's L1 or any L2, but are obviously a more recurring feature of second (or third, fourth …) language use.

The original taxonomies of communication strategies were based on the assumption that when faced with a problem, speakers must necessarily choose between two basic ways to deal with it: either they avoid the problem altogether or they try to "make the best of what they've got", i.e. use their available resources, albeit limited or even scarce, to get their message across and reach some kind of communicative result. This choice points to the possible classification of strategies into two large basic areas, which have been called *reduction* or *(risk-)avoidance* strategies, on the one hand, and *achievement* or *expansion* or *risk-taking* strategies, on the other.

To provide a rationale for this basic distinction, let us consider the fact that any person who is not a mother-tongue speaker or a very proficient bilingual must necessarily rely on some incomplete and imperfect competence - this corresponds to the present stage in his or her *interlanguage* system (Fig. 1.1).

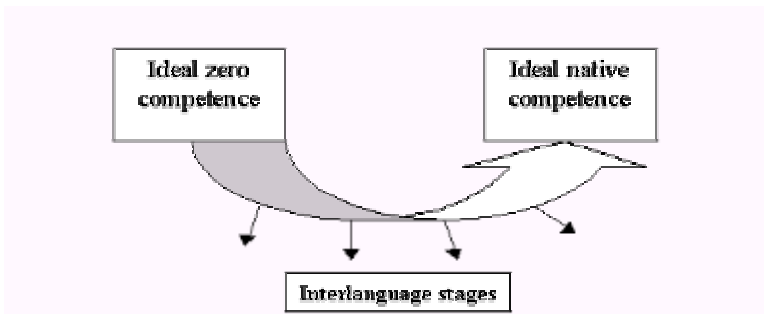


Fig. 1.1 – Interlanguage stages

Any language learner or user could thus be placed somewhere along a line between the two extremes of an *ideal* zero competence and an *ideal* native speaker competence. If we are still in the process of learning a language, we are moving along this line, we are gradually approaching the *ideal* native speaker competence by successive approximations. The term *ideal* competence is used to highlight the fact that in practice there is no absolute zero competence (one can often rely on some form of very rudimentary verbal or non-verbal communication) and, more importantly, that there is no *absolute* native speaker competence – even in L1 communication, native speakers may not find the words to say something and have to adjust their message, or ask their interlocutor for help, or use synonyms or general words to make themselves understood. (In a way, one of the most extraordinary paradoxes in language teaching is the fact that students are rarely taught, or even allowed, to use the kind of strategic devices that even native speakers are often forced to use. Language teaching is still very much concerned with exact communication - something which does not even exist – while a major challenge in language learning is precisely how to get used to non-exact communication.)

The situation when one has to cope with unexpected problems, when no ready-made solutions are available, can be described visually through a diagram (Fig. 1.2, which is adapted from Faerch and Kasper 1983b).

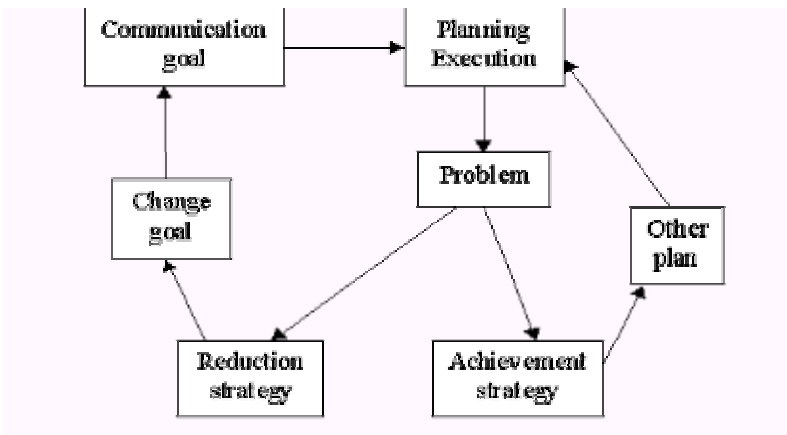


Fig. 1.2 – Strategies as problem-solving behaviour

In language learning and use, and specifically in oral interaction, we have some kind of communicative goal and we set out to make a plan and execute it. If we meet a problem, that is, if our command of the linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic code is not adequate, we have two basic choices. On the one hand, we can avoid the problem by adopting a *reduction* strategy: in other words, we keep our message within our communicative

resources, we avoid the risk, we adjust our ends to our means - in this way we change our goal. On the other hand, we can decide to keep our goal but develop an alternative plan: we adopt an *achievement* strategy, we take the risk and expand our communicative resources, we adjust our means to our ends.

2.2 Reduction strategies

Reduction strategies can affect the *form* of our communicative goal: speakers may want to avoid pronouncing certain words which imply particularly difficult sounds (like the /th/ sound in English for many L2 users), morphological "traps" (like cases in German) or grammatical structures (like the subjunctive in French or Italian): in many cases, this results in a need to adjust the message in various ways or even to sacrifice parts of it.

Reduction strategies can also affect the *content* of a message: we are all familiar with the essential strategy of *avoiding a topic* we do not feel confident to talk about. Sometimes, for instance, when I find myself in a place where they speak a language I hardly know, and have the choice between buying a ticket at a ticket office or from an automatic vending machine, I often choose the machine: I avoid taking the risk of not understanding figures, times or names of places (notice that in this case I do not really make a linguistic plan, because the task of buying a ticket allows me to use non-linguistic means).

Second language learners/users also often go through the experience of *abandoning their message*, or rounding it off quickly, because they feel it is going to involve them in all sorts of problems with grammar or vocabulary. And the reason why non-native speakers can sometimes sound vague is possibly the fact that they are replacing the original meaning (the original goal) with a simpler message. Suppose I wished to say something like, *I've been made redundant - I get dole money, but that's barely enough to carry on, let alone take a holiday*. I may find this too difficult to explain, either because I do not know the precise words to express concepts like *being made redundant* or *dole money* or because, even if I know them, I feel that my interlocutor, being from a different culture, may not know what they refer to. In this case I may start to express what I want to say but may soon abandon my message, maybe even in mid-sentence. Or I may come up with something like, *I can't go on holiday because I haven't got enough money*. By *replacing my meaning* I can still manage to get a message across (although not my original one), but a lot of my basic plan is lost and I may even sound vague to some of my interlocutors.

Reduction strategies can also affect *modality* (for example I may miss out markers of politeness and fail to observe the rules of social distance) or whole *speech acts*: for instance, if I cannot use pre-topics in opening a

telephone conversation, I may do without such starters as, *Are you busy?* or, *Am I ringing at a bad time?*, which are sometimes useful and necessary to avoid sounding too harsh. Of course such failures are not always serious, but, depending on the context, they may lead to false perceptions on the listener's part.

Reduction or *avoidance* strategies like the ones we have illustrated above are difficult to spot in actual verbal behaviour, but are an obvious and essential part of a language learner/user's instinctive repertoire. Although language learners may *not* be encouraged to avoid topics, abandon their messages or replace their meanings (let alone avoid politeness markers or useful speech acts), but rather to take risks and actively use their available resources – in other words, to adopt *achievement* or *expansion* strategies - we shall see that even a strategy like topic avoidance can play a role in developing strategic competence. This issue will be taken up again when presenting our proposed strategy typology in 2.6 below.

2.3 Achievement strategies at the word and sentence level

Turning now to *achievement* strategies, one useful first distinction that can be made here is between strategies at the *word* or *sentence level*, and strategies at the *discourse level*. It is important to make this distinction because when considering achievement strategies, one often thinks of, for example, ways of expressing the meaning of a word when the exact term is not available. In fact, as we shall see, some of the most interesting strategy uses are called forth and are actually realized during the course of interaction, when the problem extends beyond a single word or phrase and spans over several speech turns.

One of the simplest things one can do when faced with a problem in a foreign or second language is, of course, to *borrow words* from the L1: in monolingual classes, i.e. classes which share a common L1, students often use this "easy way out". Also, some people are very good at *foreignizing* words, pronouncing a word as if it belonged to the L2, or even adjusting its form to take account of typical morphological features of the L2. And we could all quote examples of *literal translation*, when, for example, the Italian *case popolari* (council houses) are simply translated as *popular houses* – an instance of how "false friends" like *popolari* and *popular* lead to all sorts of unusual and often funny utterances.

However, achievement strategies become much more interesting and productive when they are based on the learner's actual *interlanguage*, that is, when learners try to use their present knowledge and skills and stretch them,

so to say, to their limits. It is this active use of one's limited resources that becomes particularly useful in developing strategic competence.

One first area of strategies has to do with *generalization* and *approximation*: if you do not know a word, you can fall back on general words, like *thing* or *stuff*; you can use superordinates, like *flower* instead of *daffodil*; you can use synonyms and antonyms, like *very, very small* to mean *tidy* or *not deep* to mean *shallow*. Of course, these *lexical substitution strategies* imply a certain degree of generalization, a disregard for restrictions on word meaning and word usage, and can therefore appear inappropriate according to the context. If you do not know the words *scissors* and *desk*, you might try to say something like *Please give me the* thing *on the* table, but this may be too general if there are several things on several pieces of furniture in the room: in this case a supplement of information describing, for example, the location of objects (*the thing on the books*, *the table near the door*) may be necessary.

Another area of strategies involves the use of *paraphrase*, which can consist of definitions and descriptions, examples and circumlocutions.

TASK 6

CS1 Consider the following transcripts. In A, a non-native speaker (NNS) was trying to describe an object to a native speaker (NS). In B, the same non-native speaker desperately tried to make herself understood when a native speaker asked her the meaning of a very problematic Italian term.

- Try to guess what the NNS was trying to define or describe.
- What *specific* strategies did the NNS use? What *linguistic* means did she try out?

A.

NNS: Well it … er uhm ... how would you say, it's a piece of furniture which is just near your bed, er where er a bedlamp is staying on it and where I can put my books for example, my jewellery and all my things …

B.

NNS: Oh well, it's a bit difficult to explain, let me think, well it ...it used to be, I suppose, a sort of a religious holiday, and it is still now, but it … uhm it's a hol it's a very special holiday during the summer, it's just er mid-August, let's say and, well normally Italian people well they have during during this day, it' a sort of a celebration of the summer, let's say before the summer goes away, ends up…

In A, the NNS the was referring to a *bedside table*. Notice that in her description she started off with a definition, using a general word like *piece* and a superordinate like *furniture*: *it's a piece of furniture* ..., but then she went on mentioning the position of the object: ... *which is just near your bed* ... She added a typical context: ... *where a bedlamp is staying on it* ... and the function of the object: ... *where I can put my books, for example, my jewellery and all my things* …

In B., the NNS was trying to explain what Italians mean by *ferragosto*, a traditional Italian mid-summer holiday - a very difficult task indeed. Notice that achievement strategies, by their very nature, call for *restructuring* skills: we often need to reformulate what we have just said, we often need to adopt self-repair devices. This is what our non-native speaker did when she started off a sentence with ... *well, normally, Italian people* but then she was unable to continue and tried again with ... *well, they have during during this day* … She finally gave up and reformulated her description: ... *it's a sort of celebration of the summer, let's say* …

2.4 Achievement strategies at the discourse level

Let us now look at achievement strategies at the *discourse level*, that is, ways of coping with problems beyond single sentences and across talking turns.

The problems that learners can meet at the discourse level are possibly endless, since they cover the general ability to manage the interaction. Moreover, managing interactions is a very complex issue which calls into play not just strategic and pragmatic skills, but sociolinguistic and sociocultural conventions as well. The point we wish to stress here is the one we have previously made, i.e. that the most "comprehensive" views of communication strategies tend to consider the ways and means to solve a wide range of "problems" in oral interaction: not just how to compensate for linguistic deficits, but also how to manage conversations and interactions (for example, how to take turns, how to gain time to think, how to ask questions in order to shift the topic or the focus of the conversation). This view, as we shall see in Chapter 3, tends to cover areas which are otherwise considered as belonging to different, although interrelated, competences, such as strategic *vs* pragmatic competences.

Let us consider, for instance, negotiating meanings and intentions. Here we find a whole range of strategies which are sometimes called *cooperative* because they involve not just the speaker on his or her own (as was the case with the strategies we examined in the previous paragraphs), but a joint effort between two or more people. In other words, the participants in an interaction share an attempt to agree on a meaning in situations where they

cannot share the same levels of knowledge and skill. (It should nonetheless be stressed that the "cooperative" principle can apply to all cases when the interlocutor is able and willing to help: as we shall see in Task 7 below, even establishing a reference to a word by using an approximation or a circumlocution can easily become a joint effort, and thus be justifiably considered a meaning-negotiation strategy.)

The most straightforward examples of cooperative strategies are the various ways to get help from the speaker. This appeal for assistance can be direct, as when you say, *Sorry, what did you say?* or *Look, I've bought this ... oh, how do you call it?,* or indirect, as when you say, *I can 't say that in English.* These appeals for assistance are often the first step in a mutual effort on both sides to come to a satisfactory agreement on a meaning, and can imply several talking turns.

TASK 7

◙ CS2 Consider the following examples of a non-native speaker (NNS) trying to explain to a native speaker (NS) a particular situation. Try to guess what she was referring to, and consider the strategies used *by both parties.*

A.

NNS: Well, my brother has just begun taking driving lessons, you know, and he's just got er... how would you call that... a sort of a document by which he 's allowed to drive with a person with the driving licence beside him.

NS: Yes.

NNS: Yes.

NS: Er .. he 's a learner driver.

NNS: I see. Would you call that document learner driver? Would you ... would you …

NS: No, you would call it a provisional licence.

NNS: Oh, that's it.

B.

NNS: My father has recently been made redundant and … but in Italy we have er … I don't know how you would call that … I mean, he was made somehow redundant, but he gets some of his salary, and this salary is paid by … is paid by the State, somehow.

NS: Right. So your father's getting a pension.

NNS: No, it's not really a pension because it is temporary, you know, so he was made redundant, let's say for six months, just because the factory closes up for … I mean, diminishes the, the workload …

NS: He gets unemployment benefit?

NNS: Maybe, yes, maybe that.

In A, the non-native speaker was referring to a *provisional driving licence.* Notice that she first established the context: ... *Well, my brother has just begun taking driving lessons, you know* ... but soon experienced a problem: ... *and he's just got er* ... She immediately and explicitly signalled that she needed help: ... *how would you call that* ... although she tried to provide a definition: ... *a sort of a document by which he's allowed to drive with a person with the driving licence beside him* ... The native speaker came to her rescue by stating what she had understood that far: ... *he's a learner driver*... The non-native speaker wasn't really convinced and asked for confirmation of what she had understood: *I see. Would you call that document learner driver?* ... and then, again, asked for more help: *would you ... would you* ... The native speaker was now able to provide the exact term: ... *No, you would call it a provisional licence.*

In B, too, the non-native speaker first established the context: *My father has been made redundant* …. Then she immediately needed to rephrase her utterance: … *but in Italy we have er* … and explicitly asked for help: *I don't know how you would call that* … Then she tried to describe the situation by paraphrasing the basic meaning of *unemployment benefit*: *he gets some of … of his salary, and this salary is paid by … the State, somehow.* Notice that agreement on meanings is reached through a process of negotiation and mutual effort: the native speaker put forward a hypothesis: *Right. So your father's getting a pension* but was immediately corrected by the non-native speaker: *No, it's not really a pension* …, who then proceeded to provide another description and alternative definitions: *the factory closes up for … I mean, diminishes the, the workload* …, prompting the native speaker to guess again: *He gets unemployment benefit?*, finally obtaining a (tentative) confirmation by the non-native speaker.

Cooperative strategies include other forms of mutual assistance. For example, if someone says, *Look at the sign. It's an urban clearway area,* you can check that you have understood by saying *Does that mean you can't park here?* or *I'm not quite with you. You mean you can't park here?* In this way you prompt the other person to confirm what you have understood. Of course you can do this in a number of other ways, for example, if somebody says, *Don 't forget to change at Clapham Junction,* you can repeat the main information: *Change at Clapham Junction,* which may prompt the other person to say

something like, *That's right.* or *Precisely.* You may also need to check that the other person has understood you: if you say *I think this one is a through train,* you can add something like, *Got it?* or *Are you with me?* or *Do you see what I mean?* What is crucial to notice in all these examples is not just the use of fixed phrases, which are in themselves quite useful, but also, and more importantly, the interactive way in which people can try to solve their problems together.

2.5 Factors affecting strategy choice and use

The choice of a particular strategy in response to a problem or communicative situation depends on variety of factors, linked to the *context of strategy use*, the *personality* of the speakers, their *level of proficiency*, and the *teaching approach* to which learners are exposed.

The features of the *context* in which the strategy is required include, for example, the presence of one or more interlocutors, the degree of formality/informality of the situation and relevant language registers which are appropriate to use, the purpose and content of the communicative exchange, the willingness of the participants to communicate and to be helpful in the communicative exchange, the time available for processing both input (comprehension) and output (production), and the intercultural dimension.

An informal conversation between two friends can make fewer demands than a more formal discussion involving several participants who are strangers to each other – although sometimes managing "small talk" is no easy task for a barely proficient language user. On the other hand, a more formal discussion may have been structured in advance and be conducted along fairly established guidelines, which may involve, for example, clearer ways to hold the floor, take turns, interrupt, and so on (although this, of course, assumes that participants are aware of the linguistic and extra-linguistic signals associated with these "discussion techniques").

Time pressure in particular can create problems in oral interaction, which involves both comprehension and production in real time. The availability of strategies for "gaining time" to find one's words or build a suitable reply may become crucial for handling such situations. These strategies may include the use of "fillers" (like *Aha … Mmm … I see … Well …*), the use of pre-fabricated "chunks" to keep the conversational channel open (like *You know what I mean … and things like that … that sort of things …*), the reversing of questions (*But what about you?*) and other ways to shift the "conversational burden" to the interlocutor, so as to reduce one's speaking time.

However, a strong word of warning is necessary when we consider the *intercultural dimension* of strategy use. Especially non-verbal language can have different meanings in different cultures: the degree of tolerance of silence, for example, is a feature of cultural communicative styles (see 1.7). The use of fillers to "gain time" and fill in gaps between speech turns can be felt as a need by some speakers, but can also sound irritating or even insulting in some cultures (like the Finnish and Japanese ones) where silence is not only tolerated, but also valued as an opportunity to gather one's thoughts.

In the same way, the meaning of gestures is notoriously different in different cultures, and great care is needed when using them: shaking and nodding the head may not mean "no" and "yes" respectively, but even the reverse. Using a lot of gestures may be considered acceptable or unacceptable, just like the degree of physical proximity or touching other people's body. Language learners and users should be made aware of these issues and invited to take great care in choosing and using non-verbal strategies.

TASK 8

Consider your own personal characteristics as a language learner/user.

- Where would you place yourself on each continuum?
- How do you think your individual profile would affect the choice and use of communication strategies?

I tend to …

be reflective ←----------→be impulsive

focus on form, accuracy ←----------→ focus on meaning, fluency

like to formulate←----------→ like to collect and use
and use rules examples of language

plan in advance ←----------→ correct myself as I speak

cautious, hate to take risks ←----------→relaxed, like to take risks

less tolerant of ambiguity ←----------→more tolerant of ambiguity

Personality traits play a major role in the selection and use of communication strategies:

> "To some people skill in coping comes naturally. Somehow they manage, whatever their lack of skill or knowledge with regard to the "proper" forms o communication. Most people, however, will benefit substantially by being given ample opportunity, in the course of their learning process, to develop their skill in this respect. It is not primarily a matter of being "taught" how to cope, but of being led to develop one's own strategies for doing so. Although certain strategies and techniques may almost certainly be beneficial to everyone, individual differences corresponding to differences in personality are to be given full scope." (van Ek and Trim 1991: 64)

We have already mentioned the fact that *reduction* or *avoidance* strategies allow people to "stay on the safe side" and reduce risk-taking, therefore appealing in particular to potentially introvert, anxious, risk-avoiding individuals. More extrovert, less anxious, risk-taking individuals, on the other hand, may adopt more easily *achievement* strategies, which make greater demands on one's resources and correspondingly expose speakers to possible failures. Motivational factors may be involved in this respect: the degree of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem, and the corresponding different expectancies of success or failure, can affect the willingness to engage in communicative situations, especially if the task is perceived as demanding in terms of the required resources and prerequisite knowledge and skill.

Another personality dimension which can affect strategy choice and use is the degree to which individuals are communication- *vs* form-oriented. Some people seem to value communication most: they tend to get messages across despite the limitations of their linguistic and sociocultural code, value fluency over accuracy, are not afraid of making mistakes or simply give priority to the communication of ideas and feelings - such people can be expected to use a variety of strategies to keep the conversation open and to get meanings across. Other individuals are more aware of their limitations, value accuracy (sometimes even over fluency), closely monitor their comprehension and production in order to avoid or reduce misunderstandings and mistakes, and are perhaps less interested in social factors of interaction: such people may be more consciously selective in the choice of strategies, may like the precise communication of ideas, and may feel they need more time to think and plan what they want to say.

Of course these personality traits always occur on a *continuum*, with different individuals showing different clusters of the features we have just discussed. One important issue, which we will take up later, when making learning and teaching considerations, is precisely how to make language learners and users more aware of their communicative profile in order to allow them to choose and use those strategies that are not only appropriate to the demands of the communicative task, but are also adequate responses to their own language and learning needs.

If learners' individual differences play a prominent role in this respect, the same can be said for different *teaching approaches*: for example, if teaching methodologies and assessment procedures stress accuracy and correctness, this may lead learners to use avoidance strategies and steer clear of or limit their use of more risk-taking achievement strategies. If, on the other hand, teachers and methodologies put a premium on a more fluent and creative use of language, learners may be more stimulated to use achievement strategies. Some kind of balance is clearly needed here, since on the one hand we want learners to "experience problems" and thus be encouraged to use strategies and activate all their linguistic resources, but on the other hand we do not want to frustrate them by putting too strong demands on their present abilities.

2.6 A proposed typology

The strategy taxonomy proposed in this volume, which will be used as the basic reference tool in Part II (*Materials and activities*), aims at providing both students and teachers with an organized, systematic set of strategies that can be found useful when interacting orally in language learning and use. In the selection and organization of strategies this taxonomy, therefore, reflects its mainly pedagogical purpose, and does not claim to provide an exhaustive or definitive classification. (Please refer to the *Further reading* section at the end of this chapter for references to other taxonomies.)

The typology includes four main groups of strategies:

- *meaning-expression strategies*: these focus on an individual's attempt to express a meaning when the specific expression is not (yet) available to her/him, by using synonyms, approximations, paraphrase, etc. This concerns mainly lexico-grammatical items (from single words to phrases to whole sentences). The attempt at meaning expression is usually initiated by the speaker, but does not exclude the interlocutor's intervention or help: in other words, the *cooperative* principle between and among interlocutors is always, at least potentially, present in all speech turns;

- *meaning-negotiation strategies*: these are definitely based on an explicit attempt at establishing meaning from *both* parties in the interaction, through various forms of asking for and giving help;

- *conversation-management strategies*: following the "extended" interpretation of *communication strategies* illustrated in Chapter 1, we have included strategies which language learners and users can find useful in handling some particularly difficult aspects of conversation, like opening and

closing conversations, trying to keep a conversation open, turn-taking, managing topics and "gaining time";

- *para- and extra-linguistic strategies*: these complement the essentially verbal communication strategies with the important and essential *non-verbal* component;
- *(intercultural) interaction-monitoring strategies*: these strategies play a rather particular role, in that they imply an awareness, on the speaker's part, of aspects of and problems in her/his own comprehension and production, i.e. an attempt at monitoring performance *online*, so to say. This often takes the form of *metalinguistic* strategies, when interlocutors deliberately shift the focus to the *form* of what is being said, e.g. asking for corrections of or comments on one's utterances, or noticing what others say and trying to use the noticed forms. Also, such strategies often imply an *interpersonal* and *intercultural* focus, e.g. checking the reactions of other people to one's performance, or apologizing for inappropriate responses and trying to correct cultural misunderstandings.

It will be clear that our typology focuses explicitly on *achievement, interlanguage-based strategies* rather than on *reduction/avoidance* or *L1-based strategies*. We believe that language learners and users should be encouraged to make the most of their growing and changing interlanguage system, by stretching beyond their "comfort zone" and take risks, rather than give up and withdraw from interaction, or fall back into L1 use. In other words, as we saw in 2.1, they should be prompted to change their plans by using alternative ways and means rather than to change their original goals. This does not mean that reduction strategies and L1-based achievement strategies should not be used or do not have an important role in language learning and use. There are often times when we need such strategies as a last resort, and indeed language learners and users often use them as a natural, intuitive, spontaneous way of coping with problems, but that does not mean that such strategies need become the focus of explicit attention or instruction. Accordingly, we recognize the existence and importance of the following strategies but do not include them in our taxonomy, nor in the materials and activities described in Part II of this volume:

- *message abandonment*, *message reduction*, *message replacement* (as illustrated in 2.2 above);
- *literal translation* from the L1 or an L3 into the L2;
- *foreignizing*, or using an L1/L3 word with an L2 pronunciation;
- *code-switching*, or using L1/L3 words, phrases, sentences or even complete turns in the context of the L2 use;
- *omission*, or simply leaving a gap in one's speech.

However, some strategies which formally belong to the "reduction" category may be found to play a special role even in an achievement-based typology. *Avoiding a topic* or *switching to a different topic*, for example, can help speakers to remain in conversation and to continue producing output (as well as prompting further input from their interlocutors). Even *feigning understanding*, or pretending to follow the conversation even when there are considerable gaps in comprehension, can help speakers to "stay tuned" and maybe give them a chance to make up for the lost parts in subsequent turns.

A. MEANING-EXPRESSION STRATEGIES	
Description	*Examples of verbal strategy markers*
1. using an all-purpose word	*thing, stuff, object, machine* … *person, human being, animal* … *do, make* …
2. using a more general word (hyperonym/superordinate) instead of the specific one (hyponym)	*flower* instead of *geranium* *animal* instead of *pet*
3. using a synonym or an antonym (opposite) of a word	*very small* instead of *tidy* *not deep* instead of *shallow* *worried, anxious* instead of *concerned*
4. using examples instead of the general category	*shirts, jeans, skirts , jackets* … instead of *clothing*
5. using definitions or descriptions:	
• general words + relative clause	it's the *person who cuts your hair* *i*nstead of *hairdresser* it's a *thing which* … it's a *machine that* … it's *when* … / it's *where* …
• phrases instead of specific adjectives describing qualities, e.g. shape, size, colour, texture, material	*in the shape of* … *the size of* … *the colour of* … *made of* …
• structure	it has … it consists of … (the) part of …
• purpose or function	*used for* …, *used to* … it *opens* a door …; a doctor *uses* it …; you *can* … with it
• context or situation	you use it *if* … in a place *where* … at the time *when* …

6. using approximations	it's *like / similar to a very tall building* instead of *skyscraper* *a kind of …, a sort of …*
7. paraphrasing	*I didn't expect her call. I was so surprised* instead of *She phoned out of the blue.*
8. self-correcting, rephrasing, repairing incorrect or inappropriate utterances or when spotting a misunderstanding	It's at the front … *no, at the back, at the back of the room.* *Sorry, I'll try to say that again …*
B. MEANING-NEGOTIATION STRATEGIES	
9. asking for help:	
• telling one's interlocutor that one cannot say or understand something:	
○ directly	A: Put it in the oven. B: *Put it in the …? / Put it where? / Sorry, I don't understand that / Sorry, I can't follow you*
○ indirectly	using a rising intonation, using eye contact or facial expressions, pausing …
• asking one's interlocutor to	
○ repeat	*Can you say that again, please?* *Pardon?*
○ slow down, spell or write something	*Can you speak slowly/spell that/write that down for me, please?*
○ explain, clarify, give an example	*What exactly do you mean by ...?*
○ say something in the L2	*What's the word for …?* *I don't know the English word.* *In* (German) *we say …* *How do you pronounce …?* *What do you call it when …?*
○ confirm that one has used the correct or appropriate language	*Is this correct?* *I want to replicate the experiment …replicate, yes?*
○ confirm that one has been understood	*Did you get that?*
• repeating, summarizing, paraphrasing what one has heard and asking one's interlocutor to confirm	*Did you say …?* *So you're saying that … is that right?*

• guessing meaning and asking for confirmation	*Is it a dishwasher? Yes?*
10. giving help, by doing what the "helping" interlocutor does in 9., e.g. trying to "adjust" to one's partner language level by speaking slowly, repeating, giving examples, asking if she/he has understood …	
C. CONVERSATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES	
11. opening and closing a conversation	*Lovely day, isn't it?* *Just look at the time! I must be off now!*
12. trying to keep the conversation open by showing interest and encouraging one's interlocutor to talk by, e.g.	
• asking questions: Yes/No type; "open" questions; "questions tags"	*Oh, dear. Were you scared?* *So what did you do then?* *Did you?*
• "reversing" a question	*But what about you?* *What do* you *think of …?*
• adding comments and exclamations	*That's interesting …* *Really?* *Gosh, yes!* *You must be joking!* *That's really good news!*
• sympathising	*Oh, what a pity!* *That's too bad!* *How awful!* *I'm ever so sorry!* *What a nuisance!*
• repeating or rephrasing what the interlocutor has just said	A: So I came back immediately. B: *Immediately? You mean you didn't wait for Charlie?*
• "feigning" to understand	A: So I pulled up at the kerb. B: *Mmm … yes …* A: and pulled out the ignition key …
13. managing turn-taking:	
• spotting the appropriate moment for signaling one wants to speak	*Er … if I just can add something there …*
• getting attention, interrupting	*Sorry (to interrupt), but …* *Just a minute …* *Excuse me, could you explain …* *Can/May I ask you something?*

• holding one's turn, e.g. by talking to oneself, repeating key words in one's interlocutor's utterance (see also 15.)	A: What your hobby? B: *What's my hobby? Well, … let's see* ..
14. avoiding or changing a topic, going back to the original topic	*By the way, …* *Incidentally, before I forget …* *That reminds me of …* *Going back to …* *As I was saying before …* *Yes, well, anyway …*
15. using tactics to "gain time" and keep the conversation channel open:	
• using pauses, remaining silent	
• "umming", "erring", mumbling	*Mmm … Er … Aha …*
• using "fillers", "chunks", hesitations devices, conversational gambits	*Well … I see …If you know what I mean … and things like that … that sort of things … as a matter of fact …well, actually, that's a very interesting question*
• "waffling" (using more words than what would be considered normal in the context)	
• repeating oneself	*So I stopped at the gate … stopped at the gate and …*
• repeating one's interlocutor's words	A: Have you got a fitted carpet at home? B: *Fitted carpet … fitted carpet* ..
D. PARA- AND EXTRA-LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES	
16. using intonation patterns, as in 9.; using sounds, as in 15.	
17. using non-verbal language:	
• mime, gestures, body movements, e.g. pointing at things	*One like* that. *I'd like* this*, please.*
• facial expressions, eye contact • smiling, laughing	
• use of objects, drawings, etc.	
E. (INTERCULTURAL) INTERACTION-MONITORING STRATEGIES	
18. asking one's interlocutor to correct one if necessary or to comment on what one has said	*Would you say that in this case?* *Did I use the right word?*
19. noticing the words that others use and remember to use them	

20. checking the reactions of other people when deciding to use new words and expressions	
21. checking if one's interpretation is correct	*Does that mean that …?* *So this means that … Am I right?* *I understand … Is it so?*
22. apologizing if one has said or done something inappropriate and trying to correct (cultural) misunderstandings	*I'm sorry I didn't know …* *I hope you don't mind if I have ...* *I'm sorry if I asked you a personal question.* *I think there's been a misunderstanding. Can you tell me …?* *I think I upset you, but I'm not sure why.*
23. dealing with uncertainty as to the acceptable behaviour, e.g. by	
• asking one's interlocutor to clarify or explain her/his culture	*How is this done in your country?* *Is that what you usually do?* *I'd like to ask you a question, but I'm not sure if it's too personal.* *What does it mean when …?*
• referring to what is customary in one's own country	*In my country we …*
• asking one's interlocutor what one should say/do or should have said/done	*Is it all right if I …?* *How should I do this?* *At what time should I be there?* *What would you say in this situation?* *What should I have done?*

Further Reading

- On "reduction" *vs* "achievement" as problem-solving behaviour see Faerch and Kasper 1983b, pp. 20-60.
- On the strategies adopted by different types of learners see Littlemore 2003.
- On the cultural dimension of communication strategies see Levine et al. 1987, Sarn 2000.
- For a comprehensive overview of strategy classifications see Dörnyei and Scott 1997; see also Rababah 2002, Safont Jordá (without date).

3 Strategy learning and teaching

3.1 Strategic competence

By learning and using communication strategies language learners and users develop a competence – *strategic competence*:

> "the mastery of communication strategies that may be called into action either to enhance the effectiveness of communication or to compensate for breakdowns in communication" (Swain 1984: 189)

As we stressed on several occasions in the previous chapters, becoming "strategic" in language learning and use refers not only to the ability to face, and possibly solve, problems in communication, but also to the ability to enhance the effectiveness of communication *per se*, e.g. by monitoring crucial aspects of conversations like opening, closing and keeping conversations open, managing turn-taking or handling topics (as witnessed in our strategy typology in 2.6). This "comprehensive" view of strategic competence, which embraces much more than just problem-solving strategies, has been put forward by several researchers since the early days of strategy studies:

> "[strategic competence is] the ability to successfully 'get one's message across' … the investigation of strategic competence is very much tied to the use of communication strategies which enable language users to organize their utterances as effectively as possible to get their messages across to particular listeners. Such strategies are also considered to be part of the ability to repair, or compensate for, breakdowns in communication" (Tarone 1989: 19)

Strategic competence has always played a decisive role as part of a more general communicative competence: Canale and Swain (1980), as well as Bachman (1990), for example, considered it a component of their respective models. The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF)*(Council of Europe 2001), on the other hand, does not explicitly refer to "strategic competence" as such, but considers strategies as "a hinge between the *learner's* resources (competences) and what he/she can do with them (communicative activities)" (Council of Europe 2001: 25), where

"communicative activities" refers to (oral and written) reception, production, interaction and mediation. Strategies are thus seen as

> "a means the language user exploits to mobilize and balance his or her resources, to activate skills and procedures, in order to fulfil the demands of communication in context and successfully complete the task in question in the most comprehensive or most economical way feasible depending on his or her precise purpose. Communication strategies should therefore not be viewed simply with a disability model – as a way of making up for a language deficit or a miscommunication."(Council of Europe 2001: 57)

Although in this view communication strategies are considered in terms of *metacognitive* operations (i.e. as the conscious activation of planning, execution, monitoring and repair activities), care is taken by the *CEF* to stress the concrete, operational value of the concept of "strategies", which are viewed as "the adoption of a particular line of action in order to maximize effectiveness" (Council of Europe 2001: 57), so that they might not be confused with deeper, mainly unconscious, *processes*.

Since strategies are defined in relation to communicative activities, the *CEF* does not provide a comprehensive taxonomy, but attempts to offer lists and, in some cases, illustrative scales, i.e. descriptions of "can do" statements for the six proficiency levels illustrated in the *CEF* itself (see Table 3.1 for *production* and *interaction* strategies).

Table 3.1 Production and interaction strategies in the *Common European Framework (CEF)*

* refers to strategies for which illustrative scales are provided, e.g. for *compensating* at level B2: "can use circumlocution and paraphrase to cover gaps in vocabulary and structure"; for *asking for clarification* at level B1: "can ask someone to clarify or elaborate what they have just said".

Production strategies:

- planning*
    - rehearsing
    - locating resources
    - considering audience
    - task adjustment
    - message adjustment
- execution
    - compensating*
    - building on previous knowledge

    - trying out
- evaluation
    - monitoring success*
- repair*
    - self-correction

Interaction strategies:

- planning
    - framing
    - identifying information/ opinion gap
    - judging what can be presupposed
    - planning moves
- execution
    - taking the floor*
    - cooperating (interpersonal and ideational)*
    - dealing with the unexpected
    - asking for help
- evaluation
    - monitoring
- repair
    - asking for clarification*
    - giving clarification
    - communication repair

As can be seen, the lists provided by the *CEF* go well beyond what are usually considered as "communication strategies" in the literature, and include the ways and means that speakers can adopt to manage communicative acts in very general terms. However, the *CEF* also provides, in the list of user/learner's competences, a description of *sociolinguistic* and *pragmatic* competences which include references to items that we have included in our strategy typology. For example, the use and choice of greetings and address forms (e.g. on arrival and on leave-taking), the conventions for turn-taking, the politeness conventions (e.g. expressing regret, apologizing for face-threatening behaviour) are all subsumed under *sociolinguistic competence*. On the same line, flexibility to circumstances and turn-taking are seen as components of *pragmatic* (*discourse) competence*, while structuring discourse (opening, turn-taking, closing) and communication repair are seen as microfunctions within the context of *pragmatic (functional) competence*.

As a concluding remark, we can say that a fairly high degree of overlapping of strategies within and across competences can be expected in a document, like the *CEF*, which sets out to establish a comprehensive,

although not rigid, framework for language learning, teaching and assessment. However, this also serves to remind us that strategic competence is a concept which cuts across several different areas of communicative competence, and, as such, is even more worth careful consideration in the context of language learning and use.

3.2 The *teachability* issue

It might seem odd to raise the question whether communication strategies *can* be "taught" in a volume which aims at providing materials and activities for strategy development. And yet researchers have often debated this issue (while practitioners have more often debated *how*, rather than *if*, strategies can be taught).

The *teachability* issue is tightly linked to the roles that strategies are assumed to play and to their corresponding status in models of communicative competence. Statements like, "What one must teach students of a language is not strategy, but language" (Bialystok 1990: 147), or, "Teach the learners more language and let the strategies look after themselves" (Kellerman 1991: 158) are clearly extreme positions, which are based on the assumption that using strategies is an essentially cognitive process, which, as such, is scarcely amenable to instruction. Moreover, such cognitive operations are assumed to have already developed in adult learners through their L1 learning, so that what these learners would need are the *L2 forms* which would enable them to perform in the foreign or second language what they are supposed to be already able to do in their L1. A corollary of this position maintains that learners are best left to practise whatever strategies they wish in real-life interactions rather than being specifically trained in their use in formal classroom settings.

An alternative view sees *L2 competence* as a result of *L2 performance*, with learners engaged in carrying out tasks for which communication strategies can act as a useful tool, provided the tasks are carefully structured so as to maximize the *need for* – and thus the *use of* – strategies. In other words, the engagement in communicative tasks would provide the condition for learners to develop L2 abilities. This does not mean dismissing already acquired L1 abilities as irrelevant, but it implies, first, establishing if and to what extent such abilities do exist (which cannot be taken for granted in L1 speakers), and second, since transfer between languages cannot be assumed to be automatic, trying to promote an *explicit transfer* of skills within an individual's *overall language repertoire* (which may include other L2s in addition to the L1).

The results of studies on the effects of strategy education on learners' proficiency are promising but mixed - this may also be due to the different strategy taxonomies used and to the different training methodologies

employed in the studies themselves. Also, much depends on what one means by "teaching" in this particular area – a question which will lead us to consider different approaches in helping learners acquire and use communication strategies (see 3.3 below).

TASK 9

Since explicit strategy education is by no means a widespread practice in language teaching, it is well worth considering the possible advantages of such practice – in other words, why strategy education can be beneficial to learners.

- How far do you think strategy education could benefit language learners? Do you think *all* learners could benefit from it, or would you identify particular groups or particular learning contexts?
- What kinds of arguments would you put forward to justify the usefulness of strategy education?

We summarize some of the reasons why we believe that strategy education can benefit all language learners:

- first, communication strategies help learners to remain in conversation, and so provide them with more input, more opportunities for checking and validating their hypotheses, and therefore more chances to develop their interlanguage systems;
- second, communication strategies may lead to more successful performance: this can have a positive impact on learning since the content of successful performance gets stored more easily in memory;
- third, by allowing learners to remain in conversation, communication strategies help them, on the productive side, to get some useful feedback on their own performance, and on the receptive side, to exercise some kind of control over their intake, for example, by enabling them to prompt their interlocutor to modify his or her utterances. In other words, strategic competence promotes learners' self-monitoring function or executive control;
- fourth, communication strategies train learners in the flexibility they need to cope with the unexpected and the unpredictable. At the same time, they help learners to get used to non-exact communication, which is perhaps the real nature of all communication. In this way, they help to bridge the gap between the classroom and the outside reality, between formal and informal learning;

- fifth, since communication strategies encourage risk-taking and individual initiative, they can also give learners the feeling that they can in some way increase their control over language use, play an active role, make choices and become more responsible for what they say and how they say it – and this is certainly a step towards linguistic and cognitive autonomy;
- finally, communication strategies can also serve as *learning strategies* (and at least partially overlap with the latter), since it is often difficult to draw the line between a situation when a learner uses a strategy to solve a particular communication problem and a situation when she/he uses the same strategy as a learning aid. Taxonomies of learning strategies usually include several examples of what we have called "communication strategies", particularly asking for help and cooperating (often considered as "socioaffective strategies"), as well as "compensation strategies" like approximation, circumlocution, mime, gestures, topic avoidance, and others.

We have already mentioned that for strategies to display such beneficial effects on language learning and use, learners must feel the need for strategy use through *experiencing a problem*, either because their interlanguage system does not yet include the items they need, or because such items are still in the process of being internalized and are therefore not yet automatized. The use of strategies as problem-solving (or problem-coping) devices can thus help learners, in the first case, to activate hypothesis formation and hypothesis testing (which are in themselves conditions for interlanguage development), and in the second case, to speed up the process of automatization. All this implies, as we have pointed out in previous paragraphs, the adoption of *achievement*, rather than avoidance or reduction, strategies.

3.3 Approaches to strategy education

The opponents to explicit strategy education claim that learners already possess an intuitive, implicit knowledge of strategies and also possibly use them in communication. This is certainly true, but for any individual learner it remains to be seen how far or to what extent he/she has developed such knowledge and can actually make active use of it. In many cases, dealing with communication strategies means handling problems that learners may not be able to handle or solve in an efficient way *even in their L1*, so that strategy education becomes an important goal of *language education*, i.e. a cross-curricular objective to be shared by teachers of all the languages taught in a curriculum, with the promotion of *transfer within and between languages* as a central concern.

With these considerations in mind, we can now turn our attention to what "teaching" may mean in relation to strategy education.

Why "strategy education"?

One may wonder why we use the term "education", rather than the more frequently used terms "training" or "instruction", to refer to the explicit "teaching" of strategies. We can only address this issue by clarifying what we think "becoming strategically competent" implies from a language learner's viewpoint.

The concept of competence is often defined (e.g. by the CEF) as a complex interrelation of knowledge *(savoir)*, skills/strategies *(savoir faire)* and beliefs/attitudes *(savoir être*: the CEF calls this dimension *existential competence*, and includes other related factors like motivations, values, styles, personality factors). Strategic competence, as described in the previous paragraph, can be analysed by using these categories as well.

Any competence is indeed based on *knowledge*, whether *declarative* (facts, concepts, relationships) or *procedural* (information on how to put the facts and concept to actual use). As we have already noted (see the typology in 2.6), strategic competence relies on a linguistic and sociolinguistic data-base: for example, to use approximation and paraphrasing strategies one needs to "know", i.e. be able to recall if necessary, words, phrases and morpho-syntactic structures such as synonyms, antonyms and general words, phrases like *in the shape of ..., the size of ..., made of ...*, relative clauses like *it's a thing which ..., it's the person who ...* . This must be complemented by the knowledge of how to use such data-base in specific contexts and situations, for instance, what features of an object are worth mentioning first: if we are trying to describe a stretcher, it is probably more useful to start from the purpose for which the object is used *(it is used for carrying sick people ...)* rather than from its shape or the materials of which it is made.

Of course, possessing these kinds of knowledge does not mean being able to put them to "competent" use in actual contexts: to do this, one has to develop the corresponding *skills*, and, as we have seen, a range of *strategies* which serve to make skills acquisition and practice quicker and more efficient. Being able to paraphrase, for example, is certainly a complex skill which involves the manipulation of lexical, grammatical and semantic elements, with the support of strategies (such as the active and flexible use of the forms or exponents we have just mentioned).

However, to be really "strategically competent" one also needs to relate knowledge and skills to one's personality, to rely on one's strengths as well as to come to terms with one's critical areas. In other words, knowledge and skills are not used in a neutral way - their use is tightly linked to the particular and personal patterns of thought and behaviour which are unique

to every individual being. Beliefs and attitudes play a special role in this respect. To be able to use strategies in a confident way, for example, one needs to believe that

- you can keep a conversation going even if you do not understand every single word;
- interaction is based on the interlocutors' cooperation;
- you can at least partially control the communicative "flow" by using appropriate strategies.

In the same way, one needs to develop positive attitudes like

- be prepared to run reasonable risks both in comprehension and in production;
- tolerate ambiguity, at least to a certain extent, and the anxiety which often comes with it;
- be flexible enough to change strategies if and when needed.

Developing competence thus involves much more than the simple acquisition of linguistic forms or the mastery of tactics or techniques: it is a *whole-person engagement*, involving the activation of *affective* and *social*, in addition to just *cognitive*, factors. Therefore "teaching" strategic competence is best conceptualized not in terms of technical "training" or "instruction", but in terms of a *comprehensive education*, with important implications for the activities and the materials through which such education can be implemented.

We can now proceed to illustrate in more detail the features of possible approaches to strategy education.

A descriptive, rather than prescriptive, approach

One basic tenet, which is based on the general overview of strategies that we provided in Chapter 2, is that introducing communication strategies cannot mean producing a set of rules for their "correct" or "appropriate" use. If we wish to identify and describe communication strategies, therefore, we must give up the idea of being prescriptive and giving rules, and limit ourselves to a *descriptive* approach: in other words, we can try to discover possible patterns and regularities, but we must treat these as probable, frequent behaviour in a given context, not as fixed, abstract norms.

In addition, as we saw in 2.5, each learner has his or her own individual interaction patterns and preferred verbal and non-verbal behaviour. If we look at how different learners handle a simple information gap exercise, for example, where they have to describe a picture to their partner, we will soon notice that some pairs will take turns in speaking more or less on an equal basis; in other pairs, one learner may lead the interaction, for example by asking most of the questions. Some learners may choose to concentrate on a general description first, and to leave details till later; others may want to get

a precise description of each detail right from the start. If this is how people behave in actual interactions, we can hardly force them into a straightjacket of pre-selected strategies. Besides, the choice of a strategy can be made at various levels of consciousness and intentionality, and depends very much on the nature of the task, the nature of the problem, and the level of language proficiency.

This clearly points to a wider pedagogic issue. Most of us would agree that we should encourage spontaneity, creativity and originality in language use, which would ban a strict control over language and over approaches which pre-determine and pre-select the ways in which language should be used. There is a further danger to beware of. For example, if we insist on the use of general words to make up for more specific terms, we may soon find that at least some learners will tend to choose "the easy way out": if they know both *daffodil* and *flower*, but choose to use *flower*, they will stop developing their linguistic system. We would then be encouraging fossilization, which would mean blocking the possibility of further learning and development of the interlanguage system.

The issue at stake here then seems to be, how to save the spontaneity of interaction while at the same time helping learners to acquire a wider range of interaction patterns – and, how to do this without running the risk of "over-teaching" strategies.

An awareness-raising approach

By "teaching", then, we might mean an approach through which we focus learners' attention on specific strategies, provide models of strategy use, make them aware of why strategies are important, how they work and when they may come in useful, and ask learners to practise the strategies in guided, as well as gradually freer, activities. Such an approach obviously takes us back to the more general question of what role formal instruction, reflection on language, and, generally speaking, awareness-raising, play in the development of communicative competence. The least we can say in this respect is that attention to form does play a role in developing proficiency, in the sense that if we become more aware of certain language features, we stand a better chance of noticing these features in the language input we are exposed to; in other words, we may become more receptive to them, and can therefore hope to gradually make them part of our own active repertoire, i.e. internalize them.

We can also add that analysis and reflection are key features of some learning styles, as much as intuition and practical communication are of others. By providing learners with opportunities for using a variety of learning styles, we will be doing something for both our convergent,

analytical learners on one side and for our divergent, memory-oriented learners on the other.

An inductive, experiential approach

We might envisage a cyclical approach which would basically alternate experience and observation (Fig. 3.1). Students could start from a receptive stage: they could be exposed to actual examples of language use in which communication strategies play a clear and significant role. Then they could be led to become aware of the use of strategies through a stage of exploration and discussion. This would be followed by a stage of practice, where students could try out the strategies for themselves. And finally, they could discuss their own performance and evaluate their strategic use. This would set the whole cycle in motion again.

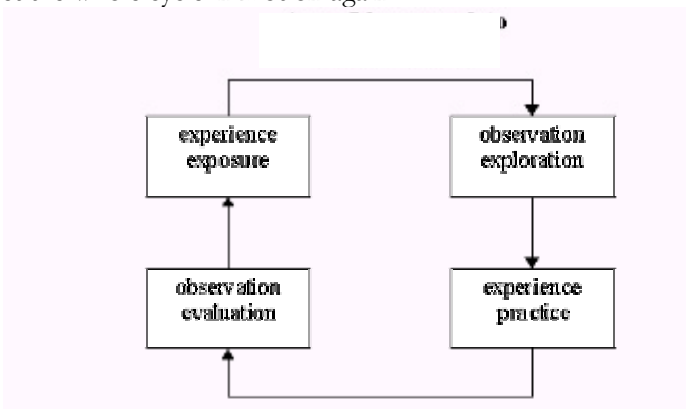


Fig. 3.1 - A possible approach to strategy education

Let us consider an example taken from Part 3 of this volume (Activity 19). Suppose we wished to focus on ways of keeping a conversation going. We could ask learners to listen to or watch two conversations, say between a woman and a man (either native or non-native speakers of the L2), and discuss in which conversation the woman sounds more interested and willing to talk: this would correspond to an initial *experience-exposure* stage.

Then we could ask our learners why they think that the woman sounds more interested in one of the conversations, what evidence is there, and we may elicit simple intuitive things like the actual amount of talking that she does, the fact that her talking turns are as long as the man's, if not occasionally longer, and her lively tone of voice. However, we need to elicit more specific strategies for keeping a conversation going, so, depending on the level of the class, we may also want to give learners the transcript and ask them to note the more specific ways in which the woman shows that she

is willing to talk. This could be done as group work, followed by a short plenary discussion. If we used a video, we could of course also discuss mime and gestures, facial expressions, physical distance, use of the context, and the like. All this belongs to what we called an *observation-exploration* stage: the learners' main task is to identify strategies and evaluate their use, and at the same time to discover the "rules", so to say, of discourse, by *inferring* them from actual contexts.

This exploratory stage would thus help to raise unconscious, automatic ways of behaving to consciousness. The next stage *(experience-practice)* would involve practising the strategies in guided tasks and then integrating them in freer production activities (which could include games, role-plays and simulations) to encourage learners to use their strategies in the context of interactive situations, and to make them part of their spontaneous language repertoire. These activities would have to be problem-oriented tasks, open-ended both in terms of language and strategies, and in terms of the actual outcome of the activity (on tasks, see 3.4 below).

The product of learners' activities could then be used for valuable feedback and "debriefing" (the final *observation-evaluation* stage). For example, if we audio- or video-record learners' performance, we can then use the recording to discuss and evaluate *their own use* of communication strategies. Or we could interview learners, or ask them to fill in a questionnaire, and assess how strategic competence has helped them to carry out a certain task.

An explicit approach

The inductive-experiential cycle, presented here as the basic framework for strategy education, does not exclude a more direct presentation of strategies, e.g. through examples, demonstrations and modelling. This can be particularly useful because several strategies are based on a series of verbal realizations, or surface structures, which learners can be exposed to and can then practise in focused activities. This is the case, for example, of many of the meaning-expression strategies (Section A of the typology presented in 2.6), like using definitions, descriptions, approximations or paraphrasing: presenting and practising phrases like *in the shape of …, it is the place where …, this is used for …, it is similar to …*, provides learners with useful *procedural* or *core* vocabulary and structures, which they can immediately put to use. In the same way, teaching expressions like *Can you repeat, please? Can you say that again? What's the word for …?, What do you mean by …?*, can equip learners with ready-made tools for negotiating meanings (Section B of our typology). Introducing and practicing these linguistic forms (real *verbal strategy markers*) could complement the *inductive* approach illustrated in the previous paragraph with a more *deductive* approach, in which learners can immediately apply the knowledge of specific verbal devices as the basis for strategy use.

A cross-linguistic, intercultural approach

We have already mentioned the fact that language learners "do not start from scratch" as far as communication strategies are concerned: depending on their age, level of instruction and knowledge of their L1 and other L2s, they could already be familiar with several strategies, because the problems faced by L2 users are a feature of L1 communication too – although, of course, the degree of complexity of the problems and the resources available to language learners and users are different in the two cases.

This speaks in favour of considering strategy education as a *whole-language policy*, by making learners aware of the fact that problems are common in both L1 and L2 use, and that sometimes it is a question of learning the different linguistic *forms* or *exponents* that strategies can take in different languages, as well as of becoming more sensitive to the types of behaviour that different cultures accept, tolerate or refuse.

Starting from the L1 (and/or from other L2s the learners may be familiar with) and from the learners' own culture is thus an option to be considered when introducing them to communication strategies. This is to be complemented by a parallel discussion of which behaviours are typical of different cultures: for example, how long can you keep a conversation going by simply being silent? How much empathy do you need to show in order to signal that you are willing to talk? How often, and how well do learners actually use such strategies in their L1? Is the frequency of strategy use different in the L2? It is in response to such important intercultural issues that we have included a section in our typology (Section E), which deals specifically with strategies for *monitoring interaction*, particularly when interacting with people from different cultures.

An immediate consequence of this approach is that authentic materials (e.g. audio or video recordings) would be extremely useful, since learners could then compare the use of strategies in their L1 (as well as their use of strategies at the present level of their L2) with that of native speakers. Realizing that native speakers, too, do face problems and do use ways to cope with them would help to stress the cross-linguistic value of communication strategies and the crucial facts that exact communication does not exist, and that even native speakers are not "perfect" users of their L1.

A comparison with the performance of other non-native speakers would be helpful too, since learners would then have the opportunity to realize that all non-native speakers share similar problems, and that coping, trying hard to understand and make oneself understood, taking risks and making mistakes are part of acquiring a communicative competence, at all proficiency levels and for speakers of all mother tongues. Situations involving problems and requiring strategy use could then be seen as useful opportunities to learn and improve one's communicative potential.

However, a word of warning is necessary. In the case of English, which is used in many different varieties and also serves as a means of international and intercultural communication (i.e. as a *lingua franca*), a constant reference to native speakers may be misleading if it hides the fact that most people using that language are *not* native speakers themselves, that most encounters in English are *between and among non-native speakers*, and that, therefore, native speakers cannot be considered as the exclusive, "ideal" reference models. In fact, bilingual and plurilingual people (i.e. speakers of more than just their L1) are often more aware of the fact that communication implies much more than mastery of a linguistic system, and are also more able to tolerate mistakes (their own mistakes as well as their interlocutors') and to show flexibility and use accommodation strategies, both linguistic and intercultural. Also, the fact that most interactions involving the use of English take place between non-native speakers puts interlocutors in a particular situation, where they do not need to comply with "perfect", "idealized" notions of mother-tongue proficiency and can perhaps feel freer to cooperate in the negotiation of meaning – with positive implications at both cognitive and affective levels.

3.4 Designing learning tasks

TASK 10

Consider the following sequence of activities, focused on the strategies involved in "adjusting the message by using approximations". Keeping in mind the approaches described in the previous paragraph, which features would you consider important for strategy education tasks?

1. Learners listen to a recording in which a native speaker (or other proficient user of the L2) is trying to define or describe a number of objects. Learners try to identify these objects from among those listed or shown on a worksheet;
2. learners listen again and/or read the transcript and identify the strategies used to give definitions or descriptions; then they are led through a guided discussion to classify the criteria that can be used to define and describe (e.g. shape, size, colour, texture, material, structure, function, context ...) and provide more examples for each criterion;
3. learners try their hand at using approximation by defining and describing objects shown in pictures of increasing complexity. This can be done as pair or group work or as a game. Some of the learners' interactions can be recorded;
4. learners compare their "products" with dictionary definitions and, if possible, with additional recorded material. During this evaluation stage,

cooperative strategies can be highlighted to stress the importance of negotiating meanings.

Tasks for strategy education could profit from the following features:

- *providing a problem-based activity* which would require *the use of a strategy* or a combination of strategies: as we have already noted, no strategy use is called for if the verbal behaviour to be performed is already and completely within the limits of the learners' present proficiency. For learners to stretch their abilities beyond what might be called their present "comfort zone", they need to be faced with contexts for which automaticity in language use is not enough, but which, on the other hand, require an additional effort of creativity and originality in activating whatever linguistic and non-linguistic resources may be available to them. The problem, of course, is to reach a careful balance between the *challenge* tasks should provide and the corresponding *support* that learners would need in carrying out the tasks – in other words, balancing tasks so that they are neither too easy nor too difficult or complex to carry out;
- *giving learners the opportunity to test* (and thus become aware of) *their present resources*: learners need to realize if and how they would be able to cope with the problem-based activity, either in their L1 and/or in the L2. It is precisely when they *notice a gap* between what they want or are asked to say or do, on the one hand, and what they feel they are actually able to say or do, on the other hand, that the need arises to activate all available resources. In other words, noticing gaps in actual ability levels provides the motivation to respond to a challenge;
- *providing examples of strategy use* by a range of (native and non-native) speakers, including the learners themselves, in the context of communicative events (e.g. taped dialogues, videos, films, web-based resourcea, class discourse). Learners need to identify the communicative/cultural problem and consider how other people, facing the same or a similar situation, have coped with it or have attempted to manage it. They also need to realize that coping with problems (without necessarily solving them) is a natural part of any communicative event, and that the ways and means to do so depend on both the people involved and the features of the task and of the context;
- *involving learners in exploring the strategy examples* in order to identify strategies and describe them, by focusing on their verbal and non-verbal realizations: these, as the typology in 2.6 illustrates, range from fixed expressions to lexical and syntactical items and structures, including both verbal and non-verbal resources;
- *providing opportunities to put strategies to use* in tasks which require and promote interaction and meaning negotiation: such tasks would have to

foster a learner-learner mode, by incorporating pair and group work, two-way information exchange, and information and/or opinion gaps (as is often the case with role-plays, simulations, games, class discussions, etc.). Learners would thus have to share different information, or have different goals to reach, linked to the problem to be solved, and be led to a convergent solution, although not necessarily a final, clear-cut decision;

- *inviting learners to reflect on their use of strategies*: learners could self-assess their performance and, at the same time, get valuable feedback from teachers as well as peers. This activity, which would obviously greatly benefit from audio- or video-recordings and even use transcripts, should lead learners to focus both on the *result* achieved through strategy use and, most importantly, on the *form* that strategies have taken during the interaction. This feedback activity can include a comparison of strategies across languages and cultures, eliciting from learners both linguistic and cultural similarities and differences;
- *raising learners' awareness of the rationale for strategy use*: a fully informed, explicit approach, as we discussed in the previous paragraph, implies that learners are made aware of what strategies are, why they are important in competence development, how they can be useful, what resources (both internal and external) can be activated, and what features of the task and context constrain their use.

Furher reading

- "Historical" references to communication strategies include Selinker (1972), who first mentioned the term "communication strategy" in the context of a discussion on interlanguage, Savignon (1972), who used the term *coping strategies*, and Tarone (1977), who provided the first taxonomy of communication strategies.
- Communication strategies are mentioned in several chapters of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001), most notably in *Chapter 4: Language use and the language user/learner*, where they are linked to the various communicative activities a language user/learner can engage in.
- The "teachability" of strategies, and the features of possible teaching approaches, is specifically addressed in Dörnyei 1995 and in Faucette 2001.
- On *learning* and *communication* strategies, see O'Malley and Chamot 1990, Oxford 1990, Cohen 1998.
- On teaching strategic competence, see Dörnyei and Thurrell 1991, Gallagher Brett 2001, Ogane 1998, Manchón 2000, Williams 2006.

- On teaching the language of conversation and discussion, see Keller and Warner 1988, Dörnyei and Thurrell 1994.
- On strategies as part of teaching pragmatics see Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor 2003, Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2006.
- On the effects of awareness-raising, see Nakatani 2005.
- For an analysis of English language teaching materials from a strategy standpoint see Faucette 2001.

PART TWO

MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

Introductory notes

The following activities provide practice in most of the communication strategies listed in the proposed Typology in 2.6. A full list of the activities and the strategies they deal with is provided in the table of contents at the front of the book.

The activities are not meant to be used in sequence, although there is a built-in progression from presentation and awareness to active use, from reception to production, from simpler to more demanding tasks. Teachers and learners should feel free to choose, adapt and change the organization and the content of the activities as they think fit, according to their needs and the features of the contexts they work in.

As a general principle, and especially in the early stages of strategy education, it is better to concentrate on a particular strategy or group of strategies. In later stages, and particularly with advanced learners, more complex patterns, involving different kinds of strategies, can be tackled.

Although the activities focus on the use of English, the most can be made of groups of learners including people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Whenever possible, learners should thus be encouraged to refer to their L1(s), compare similar strategies in different languages, and discover and discuss both linguistic and cultural similarities and differences.

The activities are presented following this layout:

- *Strategies*: the numbers refer to the Typology in 2.6. Additional information is given on the purpose of the activity when necessary;
- *Resources*: these usually include Worksheets, recordings and their transcripts. Other resources are usually limited to simple tools like a list of topics or words;
- *Procedure*: this is a detailed description of what learners and teachers are asked to do during the activity;
- *Variations*: alternatives are sometimes suggested for the whole activity or part(s) of it;
- *Worksheets*: these can be photocopied for learners' use;
- *Recordings and transcripts*: recordings can be downloaded in MP3 format from the Author's web site at the following address: *www.learningpaths.org/communication*;
- *Answer Keys*: where appropriate, these provide the keys to the tasks.

Activity 1 Introducing strategies (1)

STRATEGIES 1-8 (Meaning-expression strategies)
This activity is an introduction to communication strategies, their use and their role in language learning.

RESOURCES List of words; pictures of objects or people (for Variation 1)

PROCEDURE

1. Introduce the topic by prompting learners to consider a common problem in using an L2: not being able to express what one would want to say. Elicit the fact that this problem is not limited to the L2 situation (since L1 users experience it as well), and that all of us are equipped with strategies to deal with this difficulty.
2. Ask learners how they would explain to a person with a limited knowledge of English words like *flyover, manhole cover, fitted wardrobe* (or other words referring to people or things which are unusual or difficult to explain). If you have a monolingual class, you can use the corresponding L1 equivalents.
3. Collect answers on the board and tell learners that we can call these attempts at making oneself understood "strategies". See if they can make some useful generalizations (e.g. using a synonym, giving a description or an example, etc.), but do not go into details at this stage.
4. Provide each learner with a "secret" word (or a picture of it) and ask her/him to explain it without mentioning the word itself. The other learners must guess what it is and put it down in writing. See which learner manages to makes her/himself understood by most other learners.

VARIATION 1 All learners can see a picture of an object or a person except one, who must be helped by the others to identify it.

VARIATION 2 Learners can also ask questions to guess the word. You can limit the number of questions they can ask.

Activity 2 A closer look at strategies

STRATEGIES 1-8 (Meaning-expression strategies)
This is a language awareness activity designed to focus learners' attention on specific approximation and paraphrasing strategies.

RESOURCES Recording and transcript; worksheet

PROCEDURE

1. Ask learners what they would say or do in the following situations:
   - *You don't know the English word for "bedside table"* (you can also tell them the L1 equivalent or show them a picture);
   - *You don't know the English word for "National Health Doctor" and you want to say that she/he came to visit you at home yesterday* (you can also tell them the L1 equivalent).
2. Collect answers on the board.
3. Learners listen to a non-native speaker trying to make herself understood by an English native speaker in the same two situations. With the help of the transcript, they describe the strategies she used. Make it clear that the woman in the recording - an Italian with a reasonably good knowledge of English - has had no specific training in this sort of activity: she is simply using her own intuitive strategies to cope with the gaps in her competence (and also, to cope with the problem of expressing cultural concepts that have no exact equivalent in another language/culture). In this way, lead students to consider the fact that communication strategies are intuitive ways of using one's own linguistic and cultural resources, but that they can be refined and developed through observation and practice.
4. Hand out the worksheet. Working in pairs, learners complete each conversation on the left with one of A's responses on the right. Then they match each of A's responses with one of the listed strategies. In this way they make an attempt at classifying strategies in order to make them clearer and more memorable.
5. Learners can check their answers in different pairs

or in small groups before you conduct a plenary check.

TRANSCRIPT

CS3

1.
WOMAN: Well it's er uhm ... how would you say, it's a piece of furniture which is just near your bed, er where er a bedlamp is staying on it and where I can put my books for example, my jewellery and all my things …
MAN: I know what it is.
WOMAN: What is it?
MAN: It's a bedside table.
WOMAN: Oh, that's it. Thank you.
2.
WOMAN: Er well yesterday my uhm my doctor came to visit me but, well, let's say it's he's not a private doctor ... how could you say ... er well, we we pay taxes er out of our wages, to not to pay him but to pay for him to come to visit me ... how would you say?
MAN: He's a National Health doctor.
WOMAN: Oh, that's it.

ANSWER KEY

Features of the woman's performance which are interesting to note include:
- use of definitions *(it's a piece of furniture which …)* and of function/context of use *(it's where I can put my books...)*
- use of explanations: saying what something/someone is not *(he's not a private doctor ...)*, describing cultural context in a general way *(we pay taxes ...)*

WORKSHEET

Part 1. Complete each conversation on the left with one of A's responses on the right.

1. A: She was very concerned about her exams.
   B: What do you mean by *concerned*?
2. A.: This is a shallow river.
   B: *Shallow*?
3. A: Has your car got a large boot?
   B: What does *boot* mean?

a) A: It's the space at the back where you put your bags …
b) A: Yes, I didn't expect her call. I was so surprised.
c) A: *Worried, anxious* …

4. A: Pets are not allowed in this hotel.
   B: You mean they don't allow …?
5. A: Jane telephoned out of the blue.
   B: Sorry?
6. A: Little Jimmy came down to the beach with his bucket and spade …
   B: With what?
7. A: This shop sells all sorts of home appliances.
   B: Such has ?

d) A: You know, children use them to play with the sand …
e) A: Animals … cats, dogs …
f) A: Well, fridges, washing machines, dishwashers …
g) A: Yes, *not deep*.

Part 2. Now look at the responses on the right. How does A manage to explain what B doesn't understand? Match each of A's responses with one of the following strategies:
- using *examples*
- using a *definition* or a *description*
- using a *synonym* (= a word of the same or similar meaning)
- using an *antonym* (a word opposite in meaning)
- *paraphrasing* (= re-expressing in other words)
- using words of *more general* meaning (e.g. *flower* instead of *rose*)

ANSWER KEY

Part 1: 1c 2g 3a 4e 5b 6d 7f

Part 2

a. using a definition/description
b. paraphrasing
c. using a synonym
d. using a description/paraphrasing
e. using a word of more general meaning
f. using examples
g. using an antonym

VARIATION

You may want to remind students of the strategies used by speaker B in the Worksheet to ask the other person for clarification, e.g. questions with *mean* (Nos. 1, 3, 4), direct appeals for help (No. 5), repeating the unknown word (No. 2), requesting an example (No. 7) or an explanation (Nos. 4 and 6).

Activity 3 Forbidden words

STRATEGIES 9 (Asking for help)
4 (Using examples instead of a category)
5 (Using definitions or descriptions)(for Variation)

RESOURCES Worksheets for Learner A and Learner B, or other similar questions based on vocabulary learners are familiar with

PROCEDURE In pairs, learners ask and answer a series of questions using the Worksheet. Learner A cannot use the word *in italics* in the question, but pretends to cough instead. Learner B must ask A to repeat the question. A gives examples of the "forbidden" word, so that B can guess it and answer the question. Give a demonstration first, e.g.

A: What *(coughs)* do you like best?
B: Sorry, I don't understand. What ...? *(or any other way of asking for help – see Typology in 2.6)*
A: What *(coughs)* do you like best? Football? Tennis? Swimming?
B: Oh, you mean my favourite sport! I like cycling best.

WORKSHEET *Learner A*

1. What *colour* do you like best?
2. What's your favourite *hobby*?
3. Do you play any *musical instruments*?
4. What kind of *books* do you prefer?
5. Do you like *vegetables*?
6. What's your favourite *band*?
7. Which *month* do you like best?

Learner B

1. What's your favourite *season*?
2. What *cities* would you like to visit in this country?
3. What sorts of *movies* do you like best?
4. Do you like *fruit*?
5. Which *drinks* do you like best?
5. Who's your favourite *actor*?
6. How do you prefer to *travel*?
7. What *school subject* did/do you like most?

VARIATION In answering questions learners must not use certain set words, e.g. for the question *What cities would you like to*

visit in this country? They cannot use the names of the cities; for *festivities*, the names of the festivities (i.e. the forbidden words in this case are the specific words or examples of a category). Instead, they have to give definitions or descriptions, so that the partner can guess. Give a demonstration first, e.g.

A: What's your favourite season?
B: It's when you can go to the beach, sunbathe and swim.
A: So you like summer!

Elicit from learners and/or provide them with examples of expressions to use, e.g. *(It's) when ... where ... the person who ... a thing which ... like a ... a kind of ...* (for the use of relative clauses, see Activity 5).

Activity 4 Guessing games (1)

STRATEGIES 5 (Using definitions or descriptions)
Parts of this activity include language awareness tasks like analyzing scripts. If you want learners to focus on the use of relative clauses do give definitions, you may wish to do Activity 5 first.

RESOURCES Worksheets 1-2; recording and transcript

PROCEDURE

1. Tell learners that they have to guess an object which you are going to describe step by step, i.e. by giving more and more details. Write on the board the first part of the description, e.g. *It's a piece of glass* … and collect guesses (including the right one if a learner provides it - but do not confirm it until the end). Continue the description, writing each time another detail and collecting more guesses: … *it's usually round* … *it's got a handle* … *you use it to look at small things* …. *like stamps or insects* … (=a magnifying glass).
2. Draw learners' attention to the different ways you can build a description or a definition of an object, e.g. by starting with a "general" word *(a piece of)* and by mentioning the material it is made of *(glass)*, its shape *(round)*, its structure *(it's got a handle)*, and its use or function *(you use it to …)*.
3. Ask learners to listen to the tape and guess which

of the people and things in Worksheet 1 the woman is defining or describing to the man (both speakers are native speakers of English). Learners may not know some of the English words for these items, some of which are sufficiently unusual to require an additional effort to define or describe them; besides, some of the items share one or more features, so that learners will have to listen carefully to identify them (both a waiter and a porter work in a hotel; both a cashier and an assistant work in a shop; both a stage and a box are parts of a theatre; both an electric mixer and a lemon squeezer are used in the kitchen; both a radiator and a stove are used for heating).
N.B. The pictures in Worksheet 1 show: 1 a radiator 2 a stage 3 an electric mixer 4 a lemon/orange squeezer 5 a stove 6 a cashier 7 a shop assistant 8 a waiter 9 a hotel porter 10 a box (in a theatre)

4. Hand out the transcript and ask learners to note the strategies used by the woman to give definitions and descriptions. Also point out that the man takes an active part in the process, e.g. by asking questions. In this way try to make the important point that conveying meanings is not a one-sided effort, but it involves negotiation - cooperating between speakers.

WORKSHEET 1

TRANSCRIPT

◙ CS4

1.
WOMAN: Now this is an object that is used in the kitchen. It is used by power that drives this kitchen ...
MAN: You mean electricity?
WOMAN: ... implement. It is used primarily for making cakes or used with cream.
MAN: What, for whipping cream?
WOMAN: Yeah. Er ... it has two metal blades to it ... do you think you know what it is?
MAN: Yes, I know exactly what it is. Right.
WOMAN: Mm.
2.
WOMAN: This again is an object which is usually housed in the kitchen. It is used for cooking ... heating. It is usually power driven though it can also be used with coal in some houses.
MAN: You said it was usually in the kitchen.
WOMAN: Yes.
MAN: Can it be in another room too?
WOMAN: Well, this is something ... this is something that can refer to two objects in the kitchen, one, as I explained, to cook by, the other could be to do with heating water.
MAN: I know what it is.
3.
WOMAN: This is a person that you will find in a shop, more often it's a woman rather than a man and you come across this woman at ... when you've finished your shopping in the shop.
MAN: I know what it is.
4.
WOMAN: Now this again is a human being ... a man, always a man, and he works in a place where you go for holidays or you stay overnight ... er ... and as you arrive at this place he will ask whether he can help you with your bags.
MAN: Yes, I know.
5.
WOMAN: Er this you will find in a place of entertainment. It costs a lot of money to sit in this particular part of the theatre. Usually there's more than one person in there at a time usually - it can house quite a few people, four or five maybe er ...
MAN: Yes, I know what it is.

ANSWER KEY 1 electric mixer 2 stove 3 cashier 4 hotel porter 5 box (in a theatre)

Features of the definitions and descriptions given by the woman which are worth noting include:
- *general class* (this is an object which/a person that/ a human being ... a man ...);
- *place and context* (housed in the kitchen .../works in a place where .../when you've finished your shopping in the shop/as you arrive at this place ...);
- *purpose or function* (used for making cakes .../to cook by ...);
- *structure* (it has two metal blades to it .../part of the theatre ...).

VARIATION 1 At the end of this activity you may want to elicit from learners more language used for defining and describing, and/or you may want them to consider the list given in Worksheet 2 and elicit more examples for each category (e.g. colours, materials). The list is not exhaustive, nor is it meant to be "learned" – it is given mainly as a way to make learners aware of the various possibilities which are open to them when they try to define or describe something or somebody.

WORKSHEET 2 Definitions or descriptions can help to express the meaning of items we don't know the English word for. In defining or describing we can refer to, e.g.
- *general class*: its' a person who …/it's a thing which …/it's a machine that …/it's when/where …
- *shape*: it's square/round/oval/rectangular … it's something in the shape of …
- *size*: it's big/small/tiny/huge …
- *colour*: it's blue/white/yellow …
- *texture*: it's smooth/rough/coarse/fine/thick/thin ...
- *material*: it's made of wood/plastic/steel …/it's a piece of …
- *structure*: it's part of a … it consists of … it's got …
- *function*: it opens a door -… it is used to water the flowers … you need it for cooking …
- *context*: a doctor uses it if/when …

Activity 5 Guessing games (2)

STRATEGIES 5 (Using definitions or descriptions)

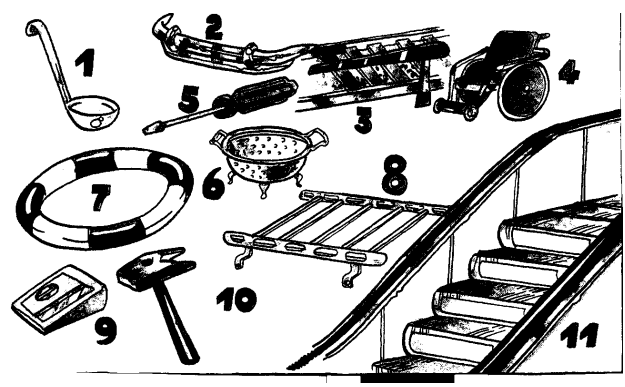
RESOURCES Worksheets 1-3

PROCEDURE 1. Ask learners to identify the people and things described in Worksheet 1. They may not know some of the English words for the items defined or described. Get them to ask you (What do you call …?) or let them use dictionaries.
2. Working in pairs, learners define or describe the items in Worksheet 2 to their partner so that she/he can guess what they are. Then they can do the same with items of their choice.

WORKSHEET 1
1. It's a machine that you use to keep the air cool.
2. It's a place in a factory where goods are kept until they are needed.
3. It's an African animal which has black and white stripes on its body.
4. A station master uses it to give the starting signal.
5. It's when you formally say that you are leaving a job.
6. It's a person that gives help and advice to people with financial or personal problems.
7. It's the soft thick fine hair that grows on the body of some animals like cats, bears, etc.
8. It's the part of a hi-fi system which you need to receive the radio signals.

ANSWER KEY 1 air conditioner 2 storeroom 3 zebra 4 signalling disc 5 to resign 6 social worker 7 fur 8 tuner

WORKSHEET 2



ANSWER KEY 1 ladle 2 bumper 3 level crossing 4 wheelchair 5 screwdriver 6 colander 7 life buoy 8 luggage rack 9 sharpener 10 hammer 11 escalator

VARIATION Learners can write definitions or descriptions of the items in Worksheet 2 and compare them with the dictionary definitions given in scrambled order in Worksheet 3.

WORKSHEET 3

·vel cross-ing /ˌ..'../ *BrE* || **grade crossing** *AmE* – *n* a place where a road and a railway cross each other, usu. protected by gates that shut off the road while a train passes

'harp-en-er /'ʃɑːpənə^{r}, 'ʃɑːpnə^{r}/ || 'ʃɑːr-/ *n* a machine or tool for sharpening knives, pencils, etc.

·ol·an·der /'kʌləndə^{r}, 'kɒ-l/ || 'kʌ-, 'kɑː-/ also **cullender** – *n* a metal or plastic bowl with many small holes in the bottom, used for separating liquid from food: *Strain the peas in the colander.*

·dle[1] /'leɪdl/ *n* a large deep spoon with a long handle, used esp. for lifting liquids out of a container: *a soup ladle*

s·ca·la·tor /'eskəleɪtə^{r}/ || also **moving staircase** *BrE* – *n* a set of moving stairs in an underground railway station, a large city shop, an airport, etc.

/heel-chair /'wiːlʧeə^{r}/ *n* a chair with large wheels which can be turned by the user, used esp. by people who are unable to walk: *The injured pilot spent the rest of his life in a wheelchair.*

ham·mer /'hæmə^{r}/ *n* 1 a tool with a heavy metal head for forcing nails into wood, or for striking things to break them or move them **2** a part of a machine or instrument made to hit another part, e.g. in a piano or gun – see picture at GUN **3** *tech* one of the bones in the ear **4 be/go at it hammer and tongs** *infml* (of two or more people) to fight or argue very hard **5 come under the hammer** to be offered for sale at an AUCTION **6 throwing the hammer** a sport in which competitors throw a metal ball fixed to a handle as far as possible

bump·er[1] /'bʌmpə^{r}/ *n* **1** a bar fixed on the front or back of a car to protect the car when it knocks against anything: *The traffic was* **bumper-to-bumper** (= very close together) *all the way home.* – see picture at CAR **2** *AmE for* BUFFER[1] (1)

luggage rack /'ˌ·· ˌ·/ *n esp. BrE* a shelf in a train, bus, etc., for putting one's bags and cases on

screw·driv·er /'skruːˌdraɪvə^{r}/ *n* a tool with a narrow blade at one end which fits into the hole cut in the top of a screw for turning it into and out of its place

life buoy /'··ˌ/ *n* a large ring made of material that will float; LIFE BELT

VARIATION It would be interesting to record some of the learners' interactions in order to find out more about their actual strategies and their ability to negotiate meanings. Learners could then discuss and comment on the recordings to evaluate their own performance and describe their strategies.

Activity 6 Guessing games (3)

STRATEGIES 5 (Using definitions and descriptions)
This activity introduces the use of relative clauses to provide definitions. The use of *general words* is practised more intensively in Activity 7.

RESOURCES Worksheet

PROCEDURE 1. Ask learners to complete a few definitions of easy words, e.g.

A … is a person … cuts your hair. (hairdresser)
A … is a thing ... you use to take photographs. (camera)
A … is a vehicle … flies in the sky. (airplane)

Depending on the level of your learners, you may wish to elicit and/or remind them of the use of *who/which/that*. Also elicit the standard form of a definition or description:

A + (general word like person, thing, machine, animal, vehicle, fruit …) + *who/which/that* + feature(s) of the item (see Worksheet 4 in the previous activity).

You can also present *when* and *where* (and possibly *whose*) in the same way:

An … is the time when the sun is obscured by the moon. (eclipse)
A … is a place where nuclear energy is produced. (nuclear power station)
A … is a dead person whose body is controlled by a spirit. (zombie)

2. Ask learners to work in pairs and write definitions using the table in the Worksheet.
3. Learners can then write similar definitions (without writing what they refer to) and exchange them. Instead of statements, they can write questions, e.g. *... is the science that studies matter and energy* or, *What is the science that studies matter and energy?* (physics); … *is the American city where you can see the famous Golden Gate Bridge* or, *What is the American city where you can see the famous Golden Gate Bridge?* (San Francisco)

The activity can be turned into a game, with learners working in pairs or small groups.

WORKSHEET

A /a n	…	is a/ an	person thing animal shop boat creature	who which	dry sell come carry have deliver write	- articles. - a very long neck. - bread. - people and cars. - your hair. - letters and postcards. - from another galaxy.

VARIATION You can give learners pictures or photographs of famous people, objects and places and ask them to define or describe them – or learners can provide their own material.

Activity 7 Guessing games (4)

STRATEGIES 5 (Using definitions and descriptions)
This activity focuses on the use of *general words*.

RESOURCES Worksheets 1-3

PROCEDURE

1. In pairs, learners try to guess the words described in Worksheet 1. Encourage them to do this without further help. Tell them that if they *really* cannot guess, they can ask you for the list of the words given in scrambled order in Worksheet 2. The winning pair is the one who complete the task by guessing *most* words without help.
2. Ask learners to tell you which *general words* are used to start the definitions in Worksheet 1 (e.g. wife = *woman*). Then ask them which general words they would use to start the definition of the items listed in Worksheet 3.
3. In pairs or small groups, learners work out the definitions. You can turn this into a competition and see who is the quickest group to finish the task with the appropriate definitions.

WORKSHEET 1

1 the woman a man is married to
2 a word which means the same as another word
3 a building where things are made
4 a building in which a collection of valuable or rare objects are put on show permanently
5 a man whose wife has died
6 the part of the body you stand on
7 a bird which moves from one place to another with the seasons OR a workman who moves from one country to another
8 the country a person was born in
9 the person a man is going to marry
10 a phenomenon when the sun or moon disappears temporarily

WORKSHEET 2 fiancée foot museum eclipse widower migrant wife homeland factory synonym

ANSWER KEY 1 wife 2 synonym 3 factory 4 museum 5 widower 6 foot 7 migrant 8 homeland 9 fiancée 10 eclipse

WORKSHEET 3

a port =	Britain =
New York =	a secretary =
Christmas =	the White House =
a cup =	breakfast =
Beethoven =	a sofa-bed =
petrol =	a giraffe =

VARIATION Individually or in pairs, learners can write definitions of more items, exchange them and guess their partners' words. Then they can compare their definitions with the ones given in a dictionary.

Activity 8 Crossword puzzles

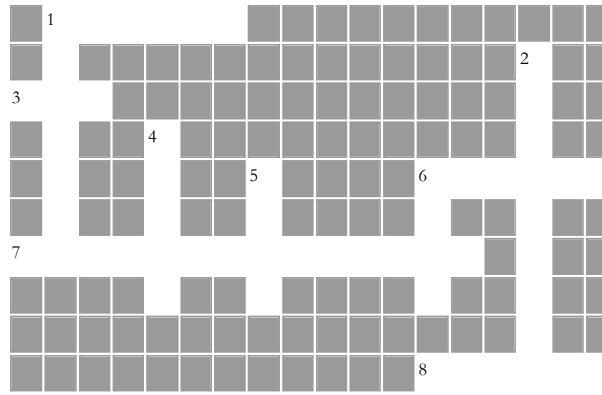
STRATEGIES 5 (Using definitions and descriptions)

RESOURCES Worksheets 1-2

PROCEDURE Working in pairs, learners first write the clues (the definitions) for their crossword, then exchange the crossword (and the clues) with another pair who reads the clues and completes the crossword.
You may wish to elicit from learners and/or remind them of the strategies and the relevant language practised in the previous activities, e.g. *Someone who … a thing which … the place where … the time when …*

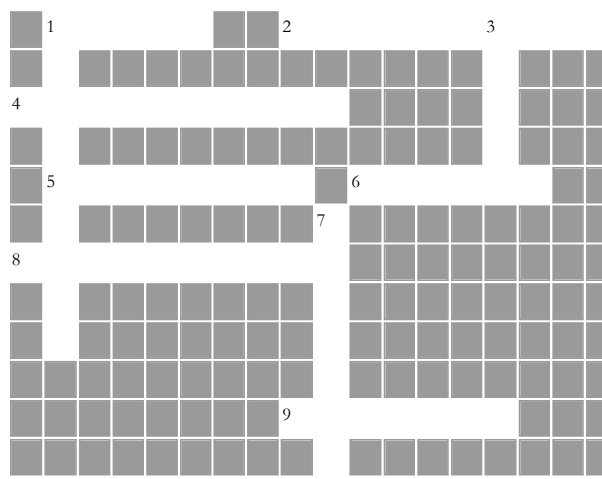
WORKSHEET 1 *Instructions for Pair A: Write the clues for this crossword, then give it to Pair B to complete.*

Across: 1. tomato 3. vet 6. spring 7. service station *(as one word)* 8. tunnel
Down: 1. theatre 2. policeman 4. train 5. fish 6. shoe



Across:
1. ……..…… 3. ……..……..……
6. …… 7.……...
8. ……..……...
Down:
1. ……..... 2. ……..……...
4. ……. 5. ……...……...
6. ……...

WORKSHEET 2 *Instructions for Pair B: Write the clues for this crossword, then give it to Pair A to complete.*
Across: 1. nurse 2. skyscraper 4. dictionary 5. hospital 6. summer 8. post office *(as one word)* 9. bicycle
Down: 1. neighbour 3. apple 7. penguin



Across: 1. ……
2. …… 4. ……...
5. …… 6. ……...
8. …… 9. ……...
Down: 1. ……..……
3. …… 7. …...…..……...

Activity 9 Call my bluff!

STRATEGIES 5 (Using definitions and descriptions)

RESOURCES Definitions from a dictionary

PROCEDURE Each group of 2 or 3 learners is given the dictionary definition of a *very unusual* item. They must write two more definitions that should sound plausible. The three definitions are then exchanged with another group who must find out the original one. The activity can be turned into a game, the winning group being the one who has successfully led the other group(s) to choose most of the *fake* definitions.

Activity 10 The helpless customer

STRATEGIES 5 (Using definitions and descriptions)
17 (Using non-verbal language)(for Variation 2)

RESOURCES A shopping list

PROCEDURE Learners work in pairs taking it in turns to play the roles of a customer and a shop assistant. They have a list of objects which they want to buy without mentioning their actual names, e.g. *a bottle of perfume, a pair of scissors, a windcheater.*

VARIATION 1 Learners work in groups of 3 or 4. One or two of them take on the role of observer to record the strategies used, which can then be commented on.

VARIATION 2 Learners can be told that they *can* use non-verbal language, too, if they want – or that they *must not* use non-verbal language. Observers can then comment on the differences between the two situations.

Activity 11 Introducing strategies (2)

STRATEGIES 9 (Asking for help)

RESOURCES Recording and transcript

PROCEDURE

1. This introductory activity should help make learners aware that it is possible, indeed desirable, to take an active part in a conversation even when it is difficult to follow what the other person is saying. Strategies to get help from the speaker include, not just asking for help directly, but also checking that one has understood and checking that the other person has understood (for a detailed list see the Typology in 2.6).
   Tell learners: *Suppose you were talking to an English friend in the following four situations. What would you do? What would you say?*
   1. You haven't understood what she/he has just said.
   2. You can't follow her/him because she/he's talking too fast.
   3. You aren't sure if you have understood right.
   4. You would like to make sure that she/he has understood you.

   Learners pool their ideas in small groups before you summarise them on the board.
2. Learners now listen to conversations in which a woman is trying to make herself understood in the same four situations. You may want to set the context of the dialogues before playing them. With the help of the transcript, learners describe the strategies the woman used (e.g. they can underline the relevant expressions).
3. Hand out Worksheet 1: working in pairs, learners match each group of expression with the correct purpose. Classifying expressions as *formal* or *informal* is not always a straightforward operation; however, learners should be able to recognize the informal expressions because they are relatively short and simple. Learners should not be supposed to learn all these expressions right from the start; they can be invited to gradually make them part of their linguistic repertoire, by using them in context.

4. Learners now complete the minidialogues in Worksheet 2. Tell them to study each situation carefully in order to choose the appropriate language to use. Make it clear that alternatives are possible.
   Note that strategies used to check that you have understood (i.e. to prompt the other person to confirm what you have understood) can be difficult to practise because they often imply summarizing/rephrasing what has been said or giving an example of what the speaker has just expressed in more general terms. You can decide to make students practise these strategies in an explicit way, or leave them free to find out the opportunities to use them, when the need for them arises in the following tasks or in other interaction activities.

TRANSCRIPT
CS5

Conversation 1
WOMAN: Er ... excuse me?
MAN: Yes?
WOMAN: Could you tell me the way to the Sports Centre?
MAN: Er ... Now, you must go straight on until you reach the Westbury Junction ...
WOMAN: Sorry, I didn't catch the last word. The Westbury ...?
MAN: The Westbury Junction ... the Sports Centre is just there. You'll see it on the left.
WOMAN: Aha. Good. Thanks a lot.
MAN: OK.

Conversation 2
Francoise is a French au pair girl staying with an English family
MAN: Francoise?
GIRL: Yes, Mr Rogers?
MAN: Can you go to Safeway down Bearwood Road and get me a couple of 100-watt bulbs?
GIRL: Er ... I'm sorry, Mr Rogers, could you speak more slowly, please?
MAN: Oh ... oh, yes, of course. I said, can you go to the Safeway supermaket ... you know, the one down Bearwood Road ...

Conversation 3
Fred is telling Rita how to print documents from a computer
BOY: ... so you just press this button to switch on the printer ... oh, one thing ... when you want to use the printer it's better to have the computer already switched on ... so that it resets the printer and ...
GIRL: Hold on ... in other words, first I switch on the computer, and then the printer ... right?
BOY: Yeah, that's it.

Conversation 4
At a driving school
TEACHER: Now, about turning right ... well before you turn, use your mirror to watch the traffic behind you. When it is safe, signal right and take up position just left of the middle of the road ... I hope that's clear?
MAN: Yes, absolutely.
TEACHER: Fine. Now, wait until there is a safe gap between you and any oncoming vehicle ... then make the turn, but do not cut the corner ... you see what I mean?
MAN: Yes.
TEACHER: Good. Then remember the golden rule: mirror - signal - manoeuvre.

WORKSHEET 1 Look at the expressions *in italics* in the three groups below (A, B, C). Which group of expressions would you use
- to *ask for help* when you don't understand?
- to *check* that you have understood?
- to *check* that the other person has understood you?

Which *two* expressions in each group are rather *informal*?

Group A
- You open the tray and insert the CD. *Are you with me?*
- We don't have to tell her everything. *Do you see what I mean?*
- We can get to Richmond by underground and then take a taxi, *if you see what I mean*.
- Then we take the money and rush off. *Got it?*

Group B
- *Sorry, what did you say?*
- *I'm sorry, what was* his name *again?*
- *What?*
- *Excuse me, I didn't hear* the last word.
- *Could you repeat* what you said, please?
- *Eh?*

Group C
A: Look at the sign. It's an "urban clearway".
B: *Does that mean* you can't park here?

A: … and press the "record" button, but only after you've pressed the "pause" button.
B: *I'm not quite with you. Do you mean* you press the "pause" button first?

A: You have to buy a ticket before you get on the bus.
B: *In other words*, you can't pay the driver.

A: Turn left at the corner. That's Angel Road. Then go straight on and turn left.
B: *If I've got it right*, I must turn left, and then left again.

ANSWER KEY Asking for help (Group B); checking that one has understood (Group C); checking that the other person has understood (Group A).
Informal expressions: A. Are you with me?/Got it?; B. What?/Eh?; C. If I've got it right …/I'm not quite with you.

WORKSHEET 2 What would you say in the following situations?

A. You haven't understood the part *in italics*.

1. FRIEND: … s0o at last I found out that she lived in *Tewkesbury*.
   YOU: ……
   FRIEND: In Tewkesbury. It's an old town on the river Avon.
2. FRIEND: You know, we were playing *the Redknots* last Saturday …

YOU: ……
FRIEND: The Redknots. It's the name of a local football team.

3. EXAMINER: … and I'd like you to ding *the odd word out* in the following list.
YOU: ……
EXAMINER: It means you must find the word which is different from the other words in the list.

B. You want to check that you have understood.

1. FRIEND: So we're going to Trafalgar Square and the National Gallery, but that's after we've been to Westminster Abbey.
YOU: …… we're going to Westminster Abbey first?
FRIEND: Yes, that's right.

2. STRANGER: Bradford Crescent? Mm … yes, you turn left at the junction, then you take the first on the left … and you turn left again – that's Bradford Crescent.
YOU: ……, I must turn left three times.
STRANGER: Precisely.

3. *(sign on door)* LICENSED TO SELL SPIRITS
YOU: …… you can have beer here?
FRIEND: Yes.

C. You want to check that the other person has understood you.

1. YOU: So Sheila is Fred's mother-in-law, …… .
FRIEND: Yes, she's the mother of Fred's wife.
YOU: That's it.

2. YOU: I think this one is a non-stop train …… .
STRANGER: Mm, you don't have to change.
YOU: That's right.

3. YOU: But you mustn't tell anybody. It's a secret, …… .
FRIEND: Yes, don't worry.

VARIATION You can introduce cooperative strategies by, e.g. speaking faster than usual or using more difficult words, so that students can be prompted to ask you to repeat, speak slowly, explain, and so on. Build up a list of useful expressions and invite students to use them when interacting orally in pairs or groups.

Activity 12 Look at that sign!

STRATEGIES 9 (Asking for help)
10 (giving help)

RESOURCES Worksheets 1-3

PROCEDURE Hand out Worksheet 3 and the secret instructions for Learner A (Worksheet 1) and for Learner B (Worksheet 2). Working in pairs, learners will have to explain some of the details of the pictures to their partner. You may want to give a demonstration first. Note that when two people interact, one of them may want to check that he/she has understood and, at the same time, the other may want to check that he/she has been understood: as a result, their strategies may overlap - this is an example of the cooperative principle at work in conversation: it is not really important who implements the strategy, provided the message is clearly sent and received.

WORKSHEET 1 *Secret instructions for Learner A:*

1. Look at signs No. 1-3-5. Ask your partner to explain any details that you don't understand or are not sure about.
2. Listen to her/his explanation and check that you have understood.
3. Your partner will ask you to explain some details of signs No. 2-4-6. Use the information below to give her/him the information.
4. Make sure that she/he has understood: confirm or correct what she/he says.

Information about signs 2-4-6:
No. 2: *"A" roads* = the major roads in the UK;

Motorail = the rail service that allows you to travel by train with your car
No. 4: *liable to* = subject to; *to subside* = to sink suddenly to a lower level
No. 6: *vacancies* = (in hotels) free rooms

WORKSHEET 2 *Secret instructions for Learner B:*

1. Your partner will ask you to explain some details of signs No. 1-3-5. Use the information below to give her/him the information.
2. Make sure that she/he has understood: confirm or correct what she/he says.
3. Look at signs No. 2-4-6. Ask your partner to explain any details that you don't understand or are not sure about.
2. Listen to her/his explanation and check that you have understood.

Information about signs 1-3-5:
No. 1: *AA* = Automobile Association; *RAC* = Royal Automobile Club; *fully licensed* = having a licence to sell alcoholic drinks
No. 3: The sign (in English and Norwegian) is outside Newcastle, at the main port of entry to Britain, by sea, from Norway.
No. 5: *high tea* = an early evening meal taken in some parts of Britain instead of afternoon tea and dinner

WORKSHEET 3

Acknowledgement (pictures): Pierce M.R. 1977. *English Sign Language.* London: Harrap.

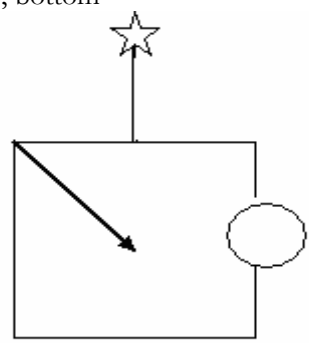
Activity 13 Back to back

STRATEGIES 1-8 (Meaning-expression strategies)
9 (Asking for help)
10 (Giving help)

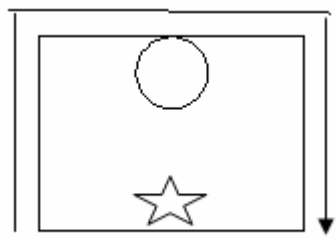
RESOURCES Worksheets 1-2

PROCEDURE Learners work in pairs, sitting back-to-back. A must describe a (complicated) picture to B, so that she/he can draw it. An example of pictures is given in the Worksheets.
Learners should not be forced to focus either on the language or on the strategies – the main purpose of the activity is to make them experience the fact that they should use all possible resources to carry out the task.

WORKSHEET 1 Describe this picture to your partner so that she/he can draw it. If necessary, ask for help if you don't understand, check that you have understood and check that your partner has understood you.
Useful words: a square, a circle, a line, an arrow, a star, a corner, top, bottom



WORKSHEET 2 Describe this picture to your partner so that she/he can draw it. If necessary, ask for help if you don't understand, check that you have understood and check that your partner has understood you.
Useful words: a rectangle, a circle, a line, an arrow, a star, a corner, top, bottom



VARIATION 1 Learners work in groups of three. C (the observer) looks and listens carefully while A and B talk and makes a note of the strategies they use. She/He then shares her/his observations with A and B (and/or in a plenary session) once the activity is over.

VARIATION 2 Instead of simply describing a picture, learners can:

- give each other directions using maps;
- give each other instructions, e.g. to assemble parts of a picture or parts of an object;
- spot the differences in a set of similar pictures, or identify the correct picture being described from a set of several slightly different pictures;
- tell a story and identify the picture which correctly describes it.

Activity 14 Opening a conversation

STRATEGIES 11 (Opening a conversation)

RESOURCES Worksheets 1-2; recording and transcript

PROCEDURE

1. To elicit learners' previous knowledge of ways of greeting, ask them how they would start a conversation with people they know and with people they don't know. Remind them of the formal/informal distinction if necessary. Briefly discuss what factors would influence their behaviour, e.g. time, place, purpose of meeting, other people present, etc. Stress the fact that it is possible to transfer their previous knowledge and experience to L2 situations.
2. Using Worksheet 1, learners match each utterance on the left with an appropriate response on the right, considering the cases in which the speakers could be strangers. When checking learners' answers, try to elicit the kinds of ways in which a conversation can be started, e.g. by simply greeting the other person, by enquiring about the other person's health, by making a remark of some sort, by asking the time or a question, etc.
3. Working in pairs, learners now think of how the speakers would start a conversation in the

situations described in Worksheet 2. They should specify some essential features of the context (e.g. personal relationships, time of the day, etc.). Then they compare and discuss their answers in groups or as a class. The group (or whole class) session is important because learners will have an opportunity to discuss and assess the communicative value and appropriateness of their answers. Non-verbal behaviour can be taken into consideration too.

4. Learners now listen to a recording (and/or read the transcript) in which the speakers start the *same* three conversations and consider the expressions used. The recorded conversations will thus provide models for comparison.

WORKSHEET 1 *Match each utterance on the left with an appropriate response on the right. In which cases could the speakers be strangers?*

1. Hi! Good music, isn't it?	A. No, I'm his cousin, actually.
2. Hi, Dan! How are you?	B. Rita! Hello! How are you?
3. Good evening, Miss Blake. Are you better?	C. Yes, great.
4. Hello! Are you a friend of Phil's?	D. I'm fine, thanks.
5. Cold, isn't it?	E. Yes, it's ten to eight.
6. Pete! Good to see you again!	F. Yes, much better, thank you.
7. Excuse me, have you got the time?	G. Yes, freezing.

ANSWER KEY 1C 2D 3F 4A 5G 6B 7E

WORKSHEET 2 *A. How would the speakers start a conversation in the following three situations? Specify any additional information you may need (e.g. personal relationships, time of the day, etc.).*

1. Two old schoolfriends who haven't seen each other for a long time meet at the bus station.
2. Two friends, who go jogging together every Saturday, meet outside a pub on a Friday afternoon. One of them is in a hurry.
3. In a disco a boy/girl sees a girl/boy that he/she would like to meet.

B. Compare and discuss your answers in groups. Are the conversations appropriate? Is there anything which doesn't sound "natural"?

TRANSCRIPT
CS6

1.
BOY: Janet!
GIRL: Mike!
BOY: Fancy meeting you here!
GIRL: Yes ... how are you?
BOY: Fine! I haven't seen you for ages!
GIRL: Yeah!
BOY: How are things?
GIRL: Oh, all right ... it's good to see you again!

2.
ALAN: Hi, Rick!
RICK: Oh, hello, Alan. Going to the club tonight?
ALAN: No ... I'm babysitting for my sister.
RICK: Oh, is she back from London?
ALAN: Yes ...

3.
BOY: Hi! You aren't Linda, are you?
GIRL: No.
BOY: Well, then you must be her sister.
GIRL: Sorry, I'm not.
BOY: Oh well, never mind. Enjoying the party?
GIRL: Not much.
BOY: Why not?
GIRL: Too many people. And too much silly talk.
BOY: Mm ... fancy a drink?
GIRL: No, thanks. Sorry, I've just seen somebody over there ...
BOY: All right, all right ...

Activity 15 Closing a conversation

STRATEGIES 11 (Closing a conversation)

RESOURCES Worksheets 1-2 and transcripts

PROCEDURE 1. You can introduce the topic in the same way as described in Activity 14 for opening a

conversation.

2. Using Worksheet 1, learners reconstruct the four dialogues, listen to the recorded version, and consider the expressions used.
3. Learners now practise in pairs, using the expressions from Worksheet 1. Remind them to give *reasons* for ending the conversations. You can give a demonstration first, or ask one or two pairs of learners to act out short dialogues in front of the group.
4. Working in pairs, learners think of how the speakers would end a conversation in the situations described in Worksheet 2. Then they compare and discuss their answers in groups or as a class.
5. Learners now listen to a recording (and/or read the transcript) in which the speakers end the *same* three conversations and consider the expressions used. (N.B. The full interaction, from starting a conversation to ending it, will be practised in Activity 16.)

WORKSHEET 1 *A. Write the letters in the correct order to make dialogues.*

1.

a) Me too. I've got to catch the 5.15 bus.
b) Yes, I will. Bye for now!
c) Goodness! I've got to be at the dentist's at five past five. I'm afraid I must go now.
d) Listen, you must come and see me some time.
e) Bye!

2.

a) All right. Take care.
b) Yes, don't keep him waiting. Let's get together soon.
c) Yes, I will. Bye!
d) I'm awfully sorry, but I'm meeting Dr May in five minutes.

3.

a) Better get back to class.
b) Maths. Listen, I'll give you a ring tomorrow.
c) Yes, see you.
d) Yeah, right. What have you got now?
e) OK. See you.

4.
a) Yes, good idea.
b) Give my regards to Julia.
c) Yes, I've got to go too.
d) Yes, and give mine to Jane. Bye!
e) Well, I really must be going now.
f) Look, why don't we go out for a meal one of these days?

B. Listen to the recorded version.

C. Make a list of the expressions used in the dialogues
- to end a conversation;
- to arrange to meet again;
- to take leave.

TRANSCRIPT
CS7

1.
WOMAN: Goodness! I've got to be at the dentist's at five past five. I'm afraid I must go now.
MAN: Me too. I've got to catch the 5.15 bus.
WOMAN: Listen, you must come and see me some time.
MAN: Yes, I will. Bye for now!
WOMAN: Bye!
2.
MAN: I'm awfully sorry, but I'm meeting Dr May in five minutes.
WOMAN: Yes, don't keep him waiting. Let's get together soon.
MAN: All right. Take care.
WOMAN: Yes, I will. Bye!
3.
GIRL: Better get back to class.
BOY: Yeah, right. What have you got now?
GIRL: Maths. Listen, I'll give you a ring tomorrow.
BOY: OK. See you.
GIRL: Yes, see you.
4.
MAN 1: Well, I really must be going now.
MAN 2: Yes, I've got to go too.
MAN 1: Look, why don't we go out for a meal one of these days?
MAN 2: Yes, good idea.
MAN 1: Give my regards to Julia.
MAN 2: Yes, and give mine to Jane. Bye!

WORKSHEET 2

A. How would the speakers end a conversation in the following three situations?

1. Two friends are talking about a concert they've been to together. Suddenly one of them remembers he/she has to be home in twenty minutes.
2. Two strangers are talking on a train. The conversation is getting very boring.
3. Two friends are talking at a party. Nearly everybody has left. It's now four in the morning.

B. Compare and discuss your answers in groups. Are the conversations appropriate? Is there anything which doesn't sound "natural"?

TRANSCRIPT

CS8

1.

BOY1: ... and the bass was very good.
BOY2: Yeah ... but I didn't like the lead guitar. Much too slow.
BOY1: Mm ... gosh, it's ten past three. I must be home by half past. I've got to rush. I'll be seeing you!
BOY2: Yes. Bye!

2.

WOMAN: ... and you should really see my garden at this time of the year ...
MAN: Mmm ...
WOMAN: ... all the roses, and the daffodils ...
MAN: Aha. Sorry to interrupt you. I hope you don't mind, but I really have to read all these papers before we get to London.
WOMAN: Oh ... oh, all right, all right.

3.

GIRL: What's the time, Pete?
BOY: Nearly four.
GIRL: Well, I'd better be going, I suppose.
BOY: Yes ... goodnight, then.

Activity 16 Starting and ending a conversation

STRATEGIES 11 (Opening and closing a conversation)
This activity follows on from Activities 14 and 15.

RESOURCES Worksheet

PROCEDURE Re-introduce the topic of opening and closing conversations (see Activities 14 and 15). In pairs, learners write short dialogues for the situations described in the Worksheet. Then they can act out and discuss their dialogues in groups or as a plenary. If time is short, you can ask each pair to concentrate only on one dialogue – in this way learners will still have the opportunity to listen to and discuss a few different situations. Once again, it is important that learners should try to assess not just formal accuracy but also communicative appropriateness, by giving explicit comments and possibly suggesting alternatives. Audio or video-recordings would be particularly useful.

WORKSHEET *In pairs, write short dialogues for the following situations. Then act out and discuss your dialogues in groups.*

1. Two friends meet at school. One of them has been very ill recently. Suddenly the bell rings.
2. Two strangers start talking while queuing up for a taxi. Eventually the turn comes for one of them to tale his/her taxi.
3. At a party, a boy/girl (A) starts talking to a girl/boy (B) that he/she rather likes. They have met only once before. Suddenly A realizes that B is his/her best friend's girlfriend/boyfriend.
4. Two neighbours (a man and a woman) are chatting in the garden about the weather. Suddenly the woman sees her husband coming up the road towards the house.

Activity 17 Keep going

STRATEGIES 12 (Trying to keep the conversation open by showing interest and encouraging one's interlocutor to talk)
17 (Using non-verbal language)
This activity is a very general introduction to the strategies used to keep a conversation going.

PROCEDURE

1. Ask a learner to talk to you about any topic for about two minutes. You listen but show little interest with your verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Next, ask another learner to talk to you for about two minutes, but this time you show interest and encourage her/him to go on talking.
2. Elicit and summarize the strategies you used to keep the conversation going. Questions include:
   - Did the two speakers feel that you were interested and paying attention? Why/Why not?
   - What did you (not) do in each case, *verbally* and *non-verbally*?
   - How did the two speakers feel during the activity? Did they find it easy or difficult? How did they react in each case?

   In this way, try to make the point that speakers and listeners are both responsible for the smooth running of conversations, and that the listener, in particular, can improve the quality of the interaction by providing the speaker with valuable feedback and by adopting specific verbal and non-verbal behaviours to do so.
   You may wish to do Activity 18 in sequence.

VARIATION Video recordings (interviews, discussions, dialogues from film excerpts) can be very useful to focus on verbal and non-verbal strategies to manage conversations. You can turn the sound off and ask learners to identify non verbal signals to, e.g. take turns, interrupt, change topics. Or you can use both sound and picture and focus on the verbal strategy markers which are used for the same purposes. Learners can also be asked to read the relevant transcripts and identify the expressions used, or to fill in blanks in the transcripts with the relevant language they hear while they watch the videos.

Activity 18 Listen, please …

STRATEGIES 12 (Trying to keep the conversation open by showing interest and encouraging one's interlocutor to talk)
17 (Using non-verbal language)
This is another activity which introduces the strategies used to keep a conversation going. More detailed work on specific strategies is provided in Activity 19.

RESOURCES A list of everyday topics learners are familiar with

PROCEDURE

1. Learners work in groups of three (A, B and C). A talks about a selected topic for 4 minutes. B should listen and react naturally (i.e. by asking questions, adding comments, etc. – but remembering that the primary speaker is A). C observes and makes a note of the (verbal and non-verbal) strategies that B uses to show that she/he is listening and to help A continue her/his talk smoothly.
2. Learners change roles, so that each in turn plays each part (A, B, C).
3. Learners share their observations first in their group, then in plenary. Questions to be focussed on include:
   - What did the listeners do/say while they were listening? What *verbal* and *non-verbal* strategies did they use?
   - Can differences be spotted in the way different listeners behaved?
   - Did the speakers feel that the listeners were interested and paying attention? Why/Why not? Were they helped or hindered in their talking task?
   - Do the speakers and the listeners find similarities and/or differences between this task and the times when they interact in their L1?
   - What other factors may be involved – e.g. individual personality, situation, cultural differences …?

   You may want to start drawing up a list of specific strategies to keep the conversation going. However, this will be taken up in detail in Activity 19.

Activity 19 Are you following?

STRATEGIES 12 (Trying to keep the conversation open by showing interest and encouraging one's interlocutor to talk)
This is a language awareness activity designed to raise learners' consciousness of how conversations develop, with a particular emphasis on the listener's role.

RESOURCES Recording and transcript

PROCEDURE
1. Learners listen to two conversations and try to say in which conversation the woman sounds more interested and willing to talk, and how she expresses this attitude. Learners may mention her tone of voice, the fact that she responds with short, neutral remarks in Conversation 1 (thus not really inviting further interaction), but with more structured answers in Conversation 2.
2. Hand out the transcript and ask learners, working in groups, to consider all the ways in which the woman shows (or doesn't show) her interest in the conversation.

TRANSCRIPT
CS9

Conversation 1
MAN: Well, how did the party go?
WOMAN: Oh, very well.
MAN: Did Jane turn up in the end?
WOMAN: Oh, yes, she did.
MAN: She's better now, isn't she?
WOMAN: Mm ... much better.
MAN: I'm sorry I couldn't make it but ...
WOMAN: Oh, that's all right.
MAN: I had a problem with my boss ...
WOMAN: I see.
MAN: ... she wouldn't let me go before seven o'clock.
WOMAN: Aha.
MAN: And when I left the office it was really too late ...
WOMAN: Yes, I see.
MAN: ... but anyway, I'm pleased to hear that ...

Conversation 2
MAN: ... and we've got another problem too. You know we wanted to fly to France next August ...
WOMAN: Yes ... you meant to leave the car at home for once.
MAN: Exactly. Well, I called at British Airways yesterday.
WOMAN: Did you?
MAN: Yes ... and they told me all the flights are fully booked. You can imagine how I felt.
WOMAN: Gosh, yes!
MAN: And apparently it'll be difficult to book the ferry too.
WOMAN: I bet it will. It's bound to be like that in August.
MAN: Yes ... the problem is, we've booked this hotel in Paris, and we've just got to be there by the twelfth.
WOMAN: Oh, what a nuisance! Have you phoned the ferry company yet?
MAN: No, not yet.
WOMAN: Mm, you'd better hurry up.
MAN: Yes ... the children would be very disappointed if we couldn't go.

ANSWER KEY

Strategies worth considering include:
- in Conversation 1, the use of "short" answers *(Oh, very well./Oh, yes, she did./Mm ... much better)* and simple "fillers" *(I see./Aha.)*, with no questions asked;
- in Conversation 2, the rephrasing or re-elaboration of the speaker's statements *(Yes ... you meant to leave the car at home for once)*, general comments and advice to increase empathy *(I bet it will. It's bound to be like that in August/You'd better hurry up)*, asking questions, both "short" *(Did you?)* and "full" *(Have you phoned the ferry company yet?)*, the use of exclamations showing emotional involvement and empathy *(Gosh, yes!/Oh, what a nuisance!)*, the use of "fillers" *(Oh, really?)*, the introduction of new topics to encourage the speaker to continue *(I've heard it's very expensive)*;
- the use of a rising (or falling/rising) intonation to

express politeness and interest. (Yes/No questions are also usually spoken with a rising intonation; wh- questions with a falling intonation.)

(Cf. the Typology in 2.6.)

VARIATION 1A

1. Ask the learners, working in groups, to read the transcript for Conversation 1 and discuss these questions:
   - What's wrong with this conversation? How do you think the speakers feel? Why?
   - How could the conversation be improved? What could the speakers say/do? What strategies could they use?
2. Learners rewrite the dialogue so that the conversation "flows" more naturally.
3. Groups compare their versions of the dialogues. Elicit the strategies used.

VARIATION 1B

Two learners act out the dialogue in plenary before the transcript is handed out. The preliminary discussion can be done in plenary; you can record the kinds of strategies suggested by learners (e.g. using a different tone of voice, asking short and full questions, adding comments, exclamations, "fillers", etc.).

VARIATION 1C

Learners read and discuss Conversation 2, highlighting and discussing the strategies used by the speakers to keep the conversation open, before rewriting Conversation 1.

VARIATION 2

Learners write and/or act out a dialogue based on a situation which requires the use of strategies to keep the conversation open (e.g. A is shy and B prompts her/him; A is in a hurry but B wants to talk; A and B are lovers that cannot find the courage to say goodbye …). A skeleton dialogue (on the lines of Conversation 1) can be handed out for learners to work on.

Activity 20 Reacting in conversations (1)

STRATEGIES 12 (Trying to keep the conversation open by showing interest and encouraging one's interlocutor to talk)

RESOURCES Worksheets 1-3, recording and transcript

PROCEDURE

1. If you have done Activity 19 with learners, remind them of and/or elicit from them some possible strategies to keep the conversation going. Learners can then use Worksheet 1 to consider more examples of strategies. If you think learners need additional practice in asking short questions like *Hasn't she?/Is he/Did you?*, this is easily done by making statements and asking learners to react to them with short questions. Note that a rising intonation in short questions tends to express more empathy and involvement on the speaker's part.
2. Worksheet 2 provides structured practice in reacting to a speaker's statement. Have a few learners act out the minidialogues in front of the whole group or in smaller groups and prompt the other learners to comment on them. Make it clear that the choice of reaction (and corresponding verbal and non-verbal behaviour or communication strategies) depends on a variety of factors, including the relationship between the speakers (social and psychological roles and statuses), their purposes in interacting, the presence of other people, etc., and that, therefore, there can be no fixed rules.
3. Worksheet 3 gives practice in answering questions and prompting the speaker to go on talking
   - by asking a short question (Examples D and F);
   - by asking a "full" question (Example E);
   - by "reversing" the original question (Example C: *What about you?*);
   - by making a remark that may be meant to raise the other speaker's curiosity and thus prompt him/her to ask further questions (Examples A/B/F);
   - by making a request for confirmation or agreement (Example H).

It is not really important that learners should become aware of conversational strategies in such detail. However, they should appreciate the fact that a conversation "flows" only when each participant is willing to make a positive contribution to it, and that it is possible to "hook" on what has just been said in order to keep the conversation going.

In Part C, students are asked to predict the kind of response prompted through the strategies listed above. They can then compare their predictions with the recorded examples and/or with the transcript.

If you want learners to go on practising in freer contexts you can proceed with Activity 21.

WORKSHEET 1 *Match each utterance on the left with an appropriate response on the right.*

1. … $300 – I didn't buy it in the end.	A. Did you?
2. I met Susan the other day.	B. Good heavens! What a terrible shock!
3. I can't sleep at night. It's terrible.	C. Really? I must go and have a look at it one of these days.
4. She hasn't phoned me yet.	D. I see. It was really very expensive.
5. … and her car crashed into a tree.	E. How interesting! Kenya is a beautiful country.
6. There's a new supermarket in Castle Street.	F. Hasn't she?
7. Barry is often late for school.	G. I know what you mean. You feel exhausted the next day.
8. So we're going on safari this year.	H. Is he?

ANSWER KEY 1D 2A 3G 4F 5B 6C 7H 8E

WORKSHEET 2 *How would you react and show that you want to go on talking in the following situations?*

1. *(at school)*

FRIEND: The maths test was horrible.

YOU: …….

2. *(at a bus stop)*
STRANGER: These buses are never on time.
YOU: …….
3. *(at a party)*
BOY/GIRL: It's very hot in here.
YOU: …….
4. *(in the street)*
NEIGHBOUR: They want to build a new block of flats opposite us.
YOU: …….
5. *(on the phone)*
FRIEND: So we stayed at home all Sunday afternoon.
YOU: …….
6. *(at home)*
FRIEND: … and so I'm looking for a new job.
YOU: …….

WORKSHEET 3

A. Match each question on the left with an appropriate response on the right.

1. Do you like living in Paris?	A. No, I'm afraid I haven't seen her for months. You know, things have changed since last summer.
2. Are you going to Kate's party tonight?	B. Well, the city's certainly very beautiful, but there are problems too.
3. Where shall we go this year?	C. I often go jogging. What about you?
4. How did you like the film?	D. I don' t think so. Are you?
5. Would you like to watch the match?	E. It depends. Who's playing?
6. Are you still in touch with Julie?	F. No we didn't, after all we went through the last time we went to Normandy.
7. Did you spend your holidays in France as usual?	G. I liked it very much. Didn't you?
8. Do you play any sports?	H. Mm, I don't know … maybe Scotland?

B. B's responses help to keep the conversation going. Can you say how?

C. What do you think A said after B's response in each case?

D. Listen to the recording and read the transcript. Note how the speakers developed the same conversations.

TRANSCRIPT CS10

1.
MAN: Do you like living in Paris?
WOMAN: Well, the city's certainly very beautiful, but there are problems too.
MAN: Really? What kind of problems?
WOMAN: Well, for a start the traffic's always very heavy, day and night. The Metro is good, but the buses are rather slow ... and then there's the problem of parking ...
2.
GIRL: Are you going to Kate's party tonight?
BOY: I don't think so. Are you?
GIRL: Oh, I think I am. After all, it's a good chance to meet again after the holidays, isn't it?
3.
WOMAN: Where shall we go this year?
MAN: Mm, I don't know. Scotland?
WOMAN: But we went there two years ago. You know what, I wouldn't mind trying Wales. What do you think?
4.
BOY: How did you like the film?
GIRL: I liked it very much. Didn't you?
BOY: Well, the story was OK, but don't tell me you liked the actors! They were simply wrong for the parts ...
5.
MAN: Would you like to watch the match?
WOMAN: It depends. Who's playing?
MAN: Arsenal versus Tottenham. Not your favourite teams, are they?
6.
WOMAN: Are you still in touch with Julie?
MAN: No, I'm afraid I haven't seen her for months. You know, things have changed since last summer.
WOMAN: What do you mean?
MAN: Well, she met somebody when she was on holiday in Greece ... and well, to cut a long story short, she simply told me she wasn't going out with me any more.
7.
MAN1: Did you spend your holidays in France as usual?
MAN2: No, we didn't, after all we went through the

last time we went to Normandy.
MAN1: Oh, what happened?
MAN2: Didn't I tell you? We couldn't find a room ... all the hotels were fully booked ... so we ended up in a small pension, you know, a boarding house ... where the food was horrible ... and the weather was even worse ...
8.
GIRL1: Do you play any sports?
GIRL2: I often go jogging. What about you?
GIRL1: I'm in a volleyball team ... I go training twice a week. But I like swimming ... pity we haven't got a pool near here ...

ANSWER KEY Section A: 1B 2D 3H 4G 5E 6A 7F 8C

Activity 21 Reacting in conversations (2)

STRATEGIES 12 (Trying to keep the conversation open by showing interest and encouraging one's interlocutor to talk)

RESOURCES Worksheets 1-3, recording and transcript

PROCEDURE

1. If you are carrying on from Activity 20 you may want to proceed directly to Step 2 below. Alternatively, you can use Worksheet 1 to reintroduce the strategies used to keep a conversation going. Learners can complete the dialogue in pairs and then compare their version with another pair or in plenary before listening to the recorded version and/or reading the transcript. Comparison of different learners' versions, as well as with the recorded one, can help to reinforce the importance of the contextual factors mentioned in Activity 20.
2. Using Worksheet 2, learners work in pairs to practise answering questions and prompting the partner to go on talking. You can first demonstrate how the activity works: get one or two learners to ask you a question. Give a response, at the same time prompting the learners to go on talking.
3. The roleplay in Worksheet 3 focuses not just on

keeping a conversation going, but also on ways to bring a conversation to a close (see Activity 15). It is a problem-oriented task, open-ended both in terms of language and strategies, as well as in terms of the actual outcome of the task.

The activity can be carried out in a more straightforward way, by simply setting learners to work in pairs. However, following the instructions in the Worksheet provides an opportunity to experiment with a different approach.

Learners first prepare one of the two roles in pairs: they think about how they are going to behave in the set situation, what kind of strategies they could use and the type of language that will be called for. Then one person in each pair will actually roleplay the conversation. The other person in each pair will actively listen and be ready to help his/her partner. This may make the interaction a bit more artificial, but can offer the support of a joint effort to learners who may otherwise feel at a loss or experience difficulties in acting out a role all by themselves.

At the end of the activity, you may want one or two groups to roleplay the situation in front of the whole group. This is a good opportunity to ask learners to spot the strategies used by their classmates and to evaluate their use and impact on the development and conclusion of the interaction.

Note: The conversation management strategies presented in this activity and in the previous ones should become part of learners' communicative repertoire: if at all possible, encourage their use in everyday language practice.

WORKSHEET 1 *A girl is telling her boyfriend about her last holiday. Fill in his side of the conversation. Then compare your version with the recorded one.*

GIRL: … and in the end we decided to hire a car.
BOY: …….
GIRL: Not, not very expensive … actually, it's quite cheap if there are three or four of you to share the cost.
BOY: …….
GIRL: So the first day we drove to the beach. Never again!

BOY: …….
GIRL: It was dirty … and crowded. There were masses of people. We couldn't find a place to sit down!
BOY: …….
GIRL: Yes, and it spoils all the fun. Anyway, we were lucky enough to find a smaller beach the next day. Still rather crowded, but al least you could lie down.
BOY: …….
GIRL: Windsurfing? Well, I tried a couple of times … but it was very difficult – I think I need more training. You know, Paul's very good at it.
BOY: …….
GIRL: Yes, he told me his brother taught him when they were in Spain last year.

TRANSCRIPT
CS11

GIRL: … and in the end we decided to hire a car.
BOY: Did you really? Wasn't it expensive?
GIRL: Not, not very expensive … actually, it's quite cheap if there are three or four of you to share the cost.
BOY: I see.
GIRL: So the first day we drove to the beach. Never again!
BOY: Why? What happened?
GIRL: It was dirty … and crowded. There were masses of people. We couldn't find a place to sit down!
BOY: I know what you mean. You can hardly walk to the sea.
GIRL: Yes, and it spoils all the fun. Anyway, we were lucky enough to find a smaller beach the next day. Still rather crowded, but al least you could lie down.
BOY: Aha. Did you do some windsurfing?
GIRL: Windsurfing? Well, I tried a couple of times … but it was very difficult – I think I need more training. You know, Paul's very good at it.
BOY: Is he?
GIRL: Yes, he told me his brother taught him when they were in Spain last year.

WORKSHEET 2 *Work in pairs. A asks one of the following questions. B answers it, at the same time prompting A to go on talking, Then change roles.*

1. Do you like reading?
2. What shall we give Cynthia on her birthday?
3. Can you ski?
4. Why don't we go to a disco next Sunday?
5. Have you seen Susan lately?
6. Were you at home last night?

VARIATION You can set up a more extended conversation, in which Learner A talks about a chosen topic (e.g. hobbies, interests and skills) and Learner B tries to take an active part by encouraging A to talk. Then learners can change roles and roleplay another conversation about a topic or situation of their choice. You could also set a time limit, saying something like, "Try to carry on your conversation for at least one minute".

WORKSHEET 3 Work in groups of four.

- Two of you will rehearse Role A and two Role B.
- One person in each pair will roleplay the conversation. The other person in each pair will listen and be ready to help her/his partner.
- The conversation should close in a definite way (e.g. a decision to stop talking, an invitation to have a drink together, an exchange of telephone numbers, etc.).

Secret instructions for Role A

You get into a train compartment and see a person you happened to meet a long time ago. You remember she/he was a nice person and want to talk to her/him. Before you start talking, decide the circumstances in which you met the person – try to be as precise as possible and be ready to help her/him recall you. According to her/his reactions, you will have to decide whether to continue or end the conversation.

Secret instructions for Role B

You are travelling on a train and are very busy studying for a difficult exam. A person gets into your compartment and starts talking to you. As you listen to her/him, you will have to decide whether or not to engage in the conversation. Think of ways to come out of the conversation in case you should decide to do so.

Activity 22 Can I beg your question? (1)

STRATEGIES 12 (Keeping the conversation open)
14 (Avoiding or changing a topic)
15 (Using tactics to "gain time")

RESOURCES Lists of questions on everyday topics

PROCEDURE

1. Ask a few learners to ask you a very specific question (e.g. *What time do you get up in the morning?*). You will answer *without* giving the information, but using tactics to "gain time" and to avoid a topic, e.g. *Well, it depends really. Of course if I have to come to school I set the alarm clock very early. But it's different on Saturdays and Sundays. Then I can really have a good lie-in* …or *Well, actually, as a matter of fact … now that you make me think about it … I rarely get up at the same time every morning. You see, it very much depends on what I have to do …*
   Elicit from the learners if they think this strategy could be of any use to them when asked questions which they can't or don't want to answer. Try to make the point that the purpose of the strategy is to keep the conversation channel open while at the same time exercising some degree of control on the interaction.
2. Now you ask a few learners a question which they will try *not* to answer. Briefly elicit and discuss the strategies used and the relevant useful language (see examples in the Typology in 2.6) before asking the learners to work in pairs asking and (not) answering questions.

VARIATION 1 When asked a specific question, learners must steer the conversation to a particular prearranged topic, e.g. *pets, swimming, Europe*. Learners can stop when they have reached the set topic, or a time limit can be set.

VARIATION 2 The activity can be turned into a game, the winner being the person who can build the longest answer (without rambling on and boring the partner, i.e. within socially acceptable limits!).

Activity 23 Follow my trail

STRATEGIES 12 (Keeping the conversation open)
14 (Avoiding or changing a topic)
15 (Using tactics to "gain time")

RESOURCES Packs of cards with words written on them

PROCEDURE

1. Working in groups, a learner picks up a card which shows a word and has to create an utterance (e.g. SCHOOL: *I didn't go to* school *this morning because I had a bad headache*). The next learner picks up another card and has to continue the conversation using his/her word, ensuring that the transition is as smooth as possible (e.g. DOG: *I know what it means to have bad headaches. Sometimes my neighbour's* dogs *go on barking all night and I get up with a terrible headache*.). The conversation continues with more learners picking up other cards (further words can include, e.g. CHRISTMAS – WATCH – POSTMAN – GERMANY – CHEESE).
   You may wish to give a demonstration with a small group of learners first, taking part in the conversation yourself. Stress the importance of the verbal and non-verbal means which can be used to "gain time" for thinking and to switch to a different topic (cf. the Typology in 2.6).
2. At the end of the activity, ask the learners what problems they met in carrying out the task and what sort of strategies they used. Briefly summarize the usefulness of such strategies (as in Activity 23).

Activity 24 Just a minute!

STRATEGIES 14 (Avoiding or changing a topic)
15 (Using tactics to "gain time")
17 (Using non-verbal language)

RESOURCES A list of unusual topics

PROCEDURE

1. Ask a learner to ask you a *very* difficult question (possibly on an abstruse topic!). You will try to answer by talking for 1 minute without stopping,

without necessarily dealing with the topic of the question, but possibly and "tactfully" switching to a different, related one which you can more confidently manage. Then ask learners to tell you how you managed to carry out the task, i.e. what strategies you used.

2. Now ask a few learners to do the same in answering *your* questions. Briefly elicit from the learners the strategies which were used this time.
3. Set the learners to work in pairs or small groups carrying out the same task. Learners can be allowed some time for preliminary rehearsal before they start talking.

VARIATION In groups of three, A and B write and exchange very difficult questions (possibly on abstruse topics!); C as the observer records the strategies used and the overall effectiveness of the communication task in terms of, e.g. clarity, ease of speech, general "flow" of the talk.

Activity 25 Can I beg your question? (2)

STRATEGIES
12 (Keeping the conversation open)
13 (Managing turn-taking)
14 (Avoiding or changing a topic)
15 (Using tactics to "gain time")
17 (Using non-verbal language)

RESOURCES Worksheets 1-3

PROCEDURE

1. Learners work in groups of three: A and B act out a conversation while C acts as the observer. Each learner is given a card with secret instructions (see Worksheets 1-3). They take turns in playing the roles of A, B and C.
2. At the end of the three rounds, learners share and discuss their observations using the questions in the C cards as a starting point.
3. Discuss with learners:

- *How did they feel when they were playing the role of A? When they were playing the role of B?*
- *What strategies did the As use to try to achieve their aims?*
- *What strategies did the Bs use to try to achieve theirs?*

- *How useful could these strategies be in real interactions? When could they be used? Would they be difficult to implement? Would there be any dangers in using them?*

In this plenary session you may also want to elicit from learners (and possibly make a list of) the various expressions used to manage turn-taking and to avoid or change topics (see also the Typology in 2.6).

WORKSHEET 1 (first round)

Secret instructions for A:
You have 3 minutes to get this information from your partner:

- *Where do you work/study?*
- *What do you like best about your job/school?*
- *What are the main problems in your job/at your school?*
- *What job would you* really *like to do?*

Secret instructions for B:
Try to answer as *few* of your partner's questions as you can in 3 minutes (but be polite and try not to bore or irritate your partner!).

Secret instructions for C (the observer):
Look and listen carefully while A and B talk. Focus on these points:

- *What are A and B trying to do? What's the problem in their conversation?*
- *What strategies do they use to achieve their aims? Make a note of both verbal and non-verbal strategies.*
- *Does the conversation "flow"? If not, why not?*

Please tell A and B when they have 30 seconds left before the time limit for their conversation (3 minutes) expires.

WORKSHEET 2 (second round)

Secret instructions for A:
You have 3 minutes to get your partner to talk about these topics *only*:

- *Cities visited in the country where you live*
- *The best holiday she/he's ever had*
- *Her/his favourite pastimes*

Secret instructions for B:
Try to avoid talking about these topics (but be polite and try not to bore or irritate your partner!):

- *Cities visited in the country where you live*
- *The best holiday she/he's ever had*
- *Her/his favourite pastimes*

by switching the conversation to a different topic.

Secret instructions for C (the observer):
Look and listen carefully while A and B talk. Focus on these points:

- *What are A and B trying to do? What's the problem in their conversation?*
- *What strategies do they use to achieve their aims? Make a note of both verbal and non-verbal strategies.*
- *Does the conversation "flow"? If not, why not?*

Please tell A and B when they have 30 seconds left before the time limit for their conversation (3 minutes) expires.

WORKSHEET 3 (third round)

Secret instructions for A:
You have 3 minutes to try to tell a story to your partner. It can be any story (fictional or real, about you or others …)

Secret instructions for B:
Your partner will tell you a story. Try to prevent him/her from reaching the end by interrupting (e.g. by asking questions on details – but be polite and try not to bore or irritate your partner!).

Secret instructions for C (the observer):
Look and listen carefully while A and B talk. Focus on these points:

- *What are A and B trying to do? What's the problem in their conversation?*
- *What strategies do they use to achieve their aims? Make a note of both verbal and non-verbal strategies.*
- *Does the conversation "flow"? If not, why not?*

Please tell A and B when they have 30 seconds left before the time limit for their conversation (3 minutes) expires.

VARIATION

In a simpler version of this activity, give learners short texts (stories, descriptions, newspaper articles). Working in pairs, one of them reads aloud the text and her/his partner interrupts her/him politely to ask

for repetitions, explanations, clarifications. A third learner can be asked to observe the interaction and make a note of the verbal and non-verbal strategies that were used by the "interruptor", as well as of the ways the speaker reacted to the interruptions.

Activity 26 No words, please!

STRATEGIES 17 (Using non-verbal language)
21 (Checking if one's interpretation is correct)
23 (Dealing with uncertainty as to the acceptable behaviour)

RESOURCES Cards with sentences or adjectives (for Variations 1 and 2)

PROCEDURE

1. In groups, learners make a list of non-verbal signals they use in day-to-day interactions.
2. Then, in plenary, each group demonstrates a signal and the others try to guess its meaning. Elicit from learners the cultural implications of each signal and possible cultural differences. Questions to focus on in the discussion include:
   - *Which non-verbal signals are shared by different cultures? Do they have the same meaning?*
   - *Which meanings are expressed in the same way by different cultures? Which ones are expressed in a different way?*
   - *In what situations and how often do you use non-verbal signals in your culture?*
   - *Do you use different signals in different contexts, with different kinds of people, or when interacting with people from another culture?*
   - *How can misunderstandings about the meaning of non-verbal signals be detected and sorted out?*

VARIATION 1 Each learner picks up a card with a sentence which she/he must act out or mime using non-verbal language *only* (e.g. *This soup is too hot! I can't walk on these sharp pebbles! It's freezing! There's a spider on my foot!*). The others must guess the original sentence as accurately as possible. The activity can be turned into a team game, and a time limit can be set.

VARIATION 2 Instead of sentences, adjectives denoting emotions can be written on the cards (e.g. *angry, sad, worried, happy*, etc.).

Acknowledgement: Inspired by Tomalin B., Stempleski S. 1993. *Cultural awareness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Activity 27 Cultural expectations

STRATEGIES 21 (Checking if one's interpretation is correct)
23 (Dealing with uncertainty as to the acceptable behaviour)

RESOURCES Worksheet

PROCEDURE

1. Introduce the topic of the activity: explain that, especially when we are interacting with people from a different culture, we may misinterpret what we see or hear, i.e. we may make false cultural assumptions – as well as others may misinterpret what we do or say. In other words, every culture has its own expectations of what is considered "normal" and "right", and we may, quite inadvertently, break them.
2. Hand out the Worksheet and go through the first example with learners. Accept all responses, prompting learners to distinguish between what they would do in their country and what they would do in an English/American context, and eliciting examples of what they would say (if a verbal response is required). Do not provide the most likely response(s) at this stage.
3. Learners work in small groups, discussing the situations and taking notes of the emerging viewpoints.
4. Collect and discuss the responses in a plenary session, highlighting and discussing the emerging cultural similarities and differences. State what the *most likely* responses in an English/American context would be (see the Answer Key), but stress the fact that these should not be seen as "fixed rules", as even within one culture there can be variations due to individual personalities and features of the context.

WORKSHEET AT A PARTY

What would you do and, if necessary, what would you say in the following situations
- if you were in your country?
- if you were in a UK/USA context?

1. You are invited to a party, but you don't like the idea very much. Would you ...
a) clearly explain that you don't like parties?
b) accept the invitation and go to the party anyway?
c) refuse in a polite way, giving an excuse?
d) accept the invitation but then don't go?

2. The party starts at 7.30 p.m. Would you arrive
a) a few minutes before the stated time?
b) exactly at 7 o'clock?
c) at about 8.30 p.m.?
d) at around 6.30 p.m.?

3. At the party you find out that you don't know anybody. Would you
a) sit or stand close to the person that invited you?
b) wait to be introduced to the others?
c) introduce yourself and shake hands with all the people in the room?
d) wait for the others to introduce themselves to you?

4. Your host offers you a drink. Would you
a) accept it even if you are not thirsty?
b) refuse and wait to be offered a drink later?
c) accept it only if you feel like it?
d) refuse and later ask for a drink if you are not offered one?

5. You are offered something to eat which you really can't stand. Would you
a) eat it, pretending that you like it?
b) leave it without saying anything?
c) refuse it straightaway?
d) explain that you cannot eat it, possibly giving an excuse?

6. You would like some more of a food that you particularly like. Would you
a) simply help yourself?
b) ask for some more?
c) wait to be offered?
d) pretend you have had enough?

7. It's getting late and you would like to go home. Would you
a) thank your host, explain that you are very tired and leave?
b) wait until all or most of the other guests have left?
c) say goodbye to everybody and leave?
d) leave without saying anything?

ANSWER KEY

1. (a) rather rude, unless you were talking to somebody you know very well; (b) not very convenient for you, unless you really *had to* go; (c) most probable answer; (d) very rude
2. A lot depends on the kind of party, the level of formality, whether you know your host very well, etc. (a) this would be acceptable; (b) no need to be so punctual, unless the occasion is really formal; (c) rather rude, unless you can give an explanation of what caused the delay; (d) inappropriate to arrive so early
3. Shaking hands is not so common (except for introductions), although if you hold out your hand people will usually shake it in a friendly way. (a) not the best choice – the person can be annoyed by this behaviour; (b) very usual – your host should introduce you to the other guests, or at least to some of them; (c) acceptable, although not very usual; (d) acceptable but dangerous – what if the others ignore you?
4. Again, a lot depends on the context. (a)(c) acceptable; (b) acceptable, but the offer may not be repeated! (d) better to make a firm decision the first time you are offered a drink
5. (a) it is not necessary to do this; (b) you could do this but might cause embarrassment; (c) this could be considered rather rude; (d) if done politely, it should be accepted by your host
6. (a) rather rude, unless the context is informal; (b)

quite possible, and even appreciated, if the context is informal; (c) acceptable; (d) not very convenient for you!
7. (a) most probable response; (b) not very convenient for you – you might have to wait a long time!; (c) not really appropriate, especially if it is a large party; (d) rather rude

VARIATION You might want to draw learners' attention to specific expressions (verbal strategy markers) to check if one's interpretation is correct and to deal with uncertainty as to the acceptable behaviour. Ask them what they would do if they had the opportunity to find out more about the demands of the situations in the Worksheet: who would they ask? What would they say? Elicit expressions like *Is it all right if ...? In my country we ... What time should I come?* etc. (see the Typology in 2.6).

Acknowledgement: Inspired by Ford C., Silverman A., Haines D. 1983. *Cultural Encounters*. Oxford. Pergamon Press.

Activity 28 Critical incidents (1)

STRATEGIES 21 (Checking if one's interpretation is correct)
22 (apologizing if one has said or done something inappropriate and trying to correct (cultural) misunderstandings)
23 (Dealing with uncertainty as to the acceptable behaviour)

RESOURCES Worksheet

PROCEDURE 1. Explain the concept of "critical incident": a situation when there is a gap in assumptions and expectations between people from different cultures. We naturally tend to "judge" what we see or hear on the basis of our own "cultural norms", and when we see these norms "broken", we may be struck by the unfamiliar or "strange". The result may be that we fail to understand each other's viewpoints and/or fail to communicate. Give an example from your own experience if possible, or quote this incident which happened to the Author of this book: He (an Italian) once had a guest from

Austria, who, on arriving, asked whether he should take off his shoes. This embarrassed the Author considerably, since it is not at all common for people in Italy to take off their shoes when entering people's homes. It was only later that the Author discovered that in Austria, as well as in other "northern" countries, it is considered polite to offer to take off one's shoes in order to avoid bringing in snow, mud, etc. from outside.

2. Hand out the Worksheet and ask learners to work individually first and then exchange their ideas in small groups.
3. Collect and discuss the answers in a plenary session. The purpose is not to establish the "correct" answer or the one that is acceptable to everybody, but to highlight the cultural differences and how we react to them. As in Activity 27, clarify what may be involved in terms of cultural differences (see the Answer Key), but stress the fact that variations are possible and stereotypes should be kept under control, since "there can be more differences *within a single group* that there are *between different groups*".
4. When discussing question 4 in the Worksheet, stress the importance of *communication strategies* to help deal with uncertainty as to the acceptable behaviour: as mentioned in the Answer Key, both Mario and Mrs Cross failed to clarify their thoughts and feelings, thus breaking down communication. Elicit from learners ways in which strategies might have come in handy and a few relevant verbal strategy markers like *I'm sorry I ... (don't like cakes very much. What is this cake made of?)* or *Don't you like cakes? This is done with nuts and almonds ...*
5. Later reactions are worth discussing too (question 5 in the Worksheet). Strategies like apologizing if one has said or done something inappropriate, trying to correct cultural misunderstandings and dealing with uncertainty can be very useful. Mario could have found out from Mrs Cross about the cake; he could have apologized and explained his reaction *(I'm sorry I didn't know ... I hope you don't mind if I have ... In Italy we ...)*. In the same line, Mrs Cross could have inquired about both Mario's personal tastes and

Italian customs *(You see, here we ... is it different in Italy?)*.

N.B. See the Typology in 2.6. Note that strategies for "putting things right" are also dealt with in Activity 30.

WORKSHEET *Consider the following situation and answer the questions. Note that there may be more than just one appropriate answer.*

THE WEDDING CAKE

Mario was an Italian teenager living in Britain for a month to follow an English course, and staying with an English family, the Crosses. Upon his arrival, Mrs Cross explained that her daughter had got married a couple of months before, and offered Mario a piece of the wedding cake that she still kept in the cupboard. Mario was extremely embarrassed and didn't know how to refuse. He mumbled something and Mrs Cross realized that she had better not insist – but she was sorry and embarrassed too. That was not really a good start for Mario's stay at the Crosses'.

1. Why did both Mario and Mrs Cross feel uncomfortable at the end? Do you think somebody was responsible for what happened?
2. Why did Mario refuse Mrs Cross's offer?

a) He doesn't like cakes.
b) He didn't understand what Mrs Cross told him.
c) He was trying to be polite by not accepting the offer straightaway.
d) He didn't know what he would have to eat.

3. Why did Mrs Cross *not* make the offer again?

a) She didn't want to embarrass Mario further.
b) She felt offended by Mario's refusal.
c) She realized that Mario doesn't like cakes.
d) She thought Italians have strange tastes.

4. What would you have done/said *at the moment* if you had been

a) Mario?
b) Mrs Cross?

5. What would you have done/said *later on* if you had been

a) Mario?
b) Mrs Cross?

ANSWER KEY

1. Critical incidents are usually nobody's real fault. The people involved are often not aware of the cultural dimensions involved in the situation and it is not easy to react in the most appropriate way on the spur of the moment.
2. All answers are of course possible, but Mario failed to use communication strategies that may have enabled him to deal with the situation in a more appropriate way. He could have explained in a polite way that he doesn't like cakes; he could have asked Mrs Cross to repeat or speak slowly; he could have enquired about the wedding cake itself. As a matter of fact, one probable explanation for Mario's embarrassment could be that wedding cakes in Italy are usually made with fresh cream and must therefore be eaten as soon as possible after they have been made, while wedding cakes in Britain are often made with nuts, almonds, etc. and can be kept longer.
3. In this case, too, all answers are possible, depending on how Mrs Cross perceived Mario's refusal. She may have attributed Mario's reaction either to his individual taste or to a cultural difference that she was not able to understand and appreciate, thus opening the door to possible stereotypes (e.g. all Italians have strange tastes).

VARIATION

You may want learners to think about their own cultural incidents using the Worksheet in Activity 29. They can then discuss the incidents in small groups and/or in a plenary session.

Activity 29 Critical incidents (2)

STRATEGIES

21 (Checking if one's interpretation is correct)
22 (Apologizing if one has said or done something inappropriate and trying to correct (cultural) misunderstandings)
23 (Dealing with uncertainty as to the acceptable behaviour)

RESOURCES

Worksheet

PROCEDURE

1. Introduce the topic of cultural incidents if this is the first time you approach it (see Activity 28).
2. In small groups, learners try to remember and discuss critical incidents they were involved in personally or have heard about, their reactions to them at the moment and what they did (or didn't) do about them later on. The Worksheet can help them structure their ideas.
3. In a plenary session, discuss the cultural implications involved in critical incidents and the ways we can react, both at the moment they happen and later on. Stress the role of communication strategies. Questions to focus on (as in Activity 28) include:
   - What did you do/say *at the moment*?
   - What could you have done/said?
   - Did you try to find out more *later*?
   - What would you do/say *now* if you were in a similar situation?

WORKSHEET CULTURAL INCIDENTS

1. Short description: ...

2. My reaction *at the moment*:
   - how I felt: ...
   - what I did/said: ...

3. What I did later:
   - I talked to people, and they said ...
   - I found out more in this way: ...

     and I discovered that ...

4. My thoughts and feelings have (not) changed: ...

5. If I had a similar experience *now*, I would do/say: ...

VARIATION 1 After the critical incidents have been presented, learners could prepare a role-play based on them, and the role-plays could be performed and discussed in a plenary session.

VARIATION 2 Films and TV recordings are a valuable source of critical incidents, particularly if they focus on intercultural relationships.

Activity 30 Don't mention it!

STRATEGIES 14 (Avoiding or changing a topic)
15 (Using tactics to "gain time")
17 (Using non-verbal language)
22 (Apologizing if one has said or done something inappropriate and trying to correct (cultural) misunderstandings)
23 (Dealing with uncertainty as to the acceptable behavior)

RESOURCES Worksheet

PROCEDURE

1. Tell learners that they are going to meet a person from a culture that they don't know anything about. They will engage in a conversation to try and find out something about the person and her/his culture.
2. Learners work in groups of four (A/B/C/D), using the secret instructions provided in the Worksheet. Learner A will be the person coming from the unknown culture. Learner B will be a journalist interviewing A on a variety of topics. Learners C and D will observe the interaction and makes notes. The interview will last 5 minutes.
3. In a plenary session, discuss how the interview was handled by both parties. Focus on the questions in the observers' cards as a starting point.
4. Discuss with learners:
   - *How did the "A" learners feel during the interview? How did the "B" learners feel?*
   - *What strategies did the As use to try to achieve their aims?*
   - *What strategies did the Bs use to try to achieve theirs?*

- *How useful could these strategies be in real interactions? When could they be used? Would they be difficult to implement?*

In this plenary session you may also want to elicit from learners (and possibly make a list of) the expressions used to avoid or change topics (see Activity 25). However, the focus of this activity is mainly on *cultural* interaction-management strategies, i.e. on the strategies that learners used (or could have used) to:

- apologize for saying something inappropriate and try to correct misunderstandings (e.g. *I'm sorry I didn't know … I'm sorry if I asked you a personal question …)*;
- deal with uncertainty as to the acceptable behavior, particularly by asking one's interlocutor to clarify or explain her/his culture (e.g. *How is this done in your country? Is that what you usually do?)* and by asking what one should say (e.g. *Is it all right if I …?).*

(See also the Typology in 2.6.)

WORKSHEET

Secret instructions for Learner A:
You come from a culture where certain topics are taboo subjects, i.e. they can't be talked about. These include family, work and food. If you are asked questions about these topics, you will feel extremely embarrassed and will try to avoid them – but in your culture you are also usually very kind and friendly and hate to be rude.

Secret instructions for Learner B:
You are a very ambitious journalist and definitely want to make a scoop by finding out as much as you can from the person who comes from this unknown culture. Try to gather as much information as you can by asking questions about the person's family, living conditions, work, leisure time, eating habits, etc.

Secret instructions for Learners C and D:
Carefully observe the interaction between A and B:

- what problems seem to emerge;
- what questions are asked and (not) answered;
- how the people seem to feel during the

interview and if their feelings seem to change;
- how they react verbally and non-verbally, particularly in the handling of topics;
- how they end the interview.

Tell A and B when they have 1 minute left before the time limit for the interview (5 minutes) expires.

VARIATION You might want learners to change roles and repeat the activity. The "surprise" effect will be lost, but you can change the "taboo topics" or replace them with "taboo sets of words" like names of people, of food and drink items, of furniture, etc.

Appendix

Developing communication strategies in intercultural encounters

1. If learners write e-mails to penfriends, use blogs, web chats or have oral or written contacts in an L2, ask them to try and record the problems they have experienced in comprehension or expression, and how they have tried to cope with them. Have them focus on concrete examples rather than general situations. Ask them to share these examples and see if someone can come up with possible solutions.
2. Encourage learners to *notice* how others (e.g. their penfriends, the foreign learners in a class exchange) seem to cope with communication problems, and help them to turn this awareness into concrete strategies they can use.
3. Brainstorm expressions that can be used in interaction for different purposes, e.g. expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, expressing doubts, etc. Have learners make a list of such strategies in their notebooks and/or on a poster, and encourage them to refer to this list for quick reference when interacting. From time to time, update the list with more complex language.
4. In preparation for school visits, class exchanges, trips abroad, etc., make a list of possible situations which learners will have to face and elicit and/or suggest the language that may "come in handy" to cope with possible or even probable communication problems.
5. Reflecting on intercultural experiences includes recalling communication problems and how one reacted to them (i.e. verbal and non-verbal behaviour). Learners can record specific examples of the language problems that were part of the experience, what they did at the time, and what strategies they would use in a similar situation in the future.

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What do you do when you need to express the meaning of a word that you don't know in a foreign language? How do you start and close a conversation, and how do you keep it going even if you can't understand everything? What can you do if you are not sure about what to say in an unfamiliar situation?

Communication strategies is a book about the verbal and non-verbal ways and means that learners and users of a second or foreign language can employ in oral interaction when they have to face problems due to gaps in their linguistic, communicative or intercultural competence. In addition to helping people "not give up" in the face of problems, communication strategies enable them to exercise more control on interaction, to deal effectively with uncertainty in personal and intercultural contacts, and to increase their autonomy in learning and using languages.

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