TRACING MOTHER TONGUE INFLUENCE ON STRATEGIC COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT ESL LEARNERS IN KOLKATA

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ABSTRACT

The key to success in the present employment sector is appropriate communication as per the context. In the current scenario, the primary aim of language trainers is not only to train learners to express and fulfil their communicative goal but also to build strategies to enable the process. This study concentrates on linguistic forms used by the students to articulate and negotiate meaning in the classroom and examination context, specifically strategic competence such as self-monitoring and interactional strategies that promote message continuity, efficiency and prevent complete breakdown of communication. It also tries to determine if strategic competence can be taught in the classroom context and what materials can be used to enhance the same in students. Strategic competence is relevant to both one's mother tongue and second language since they relate more to core aspects of communication. The study has revealed that strategic competence in L1 is often transferrable to L2 situations, which is why some adult learners of L2 are more equipped with communication strategies. Tertiary level learners bring into the classroom a general cognitive ability along with a definite prior social experience and knowledge of L1. While this puts them at an advantage in comprehending and conveying communicative intent and fulfilling interactional goals, it might also account for the interference and negative transfer from L1. Most of the learners coming from a Bengali or Hindi background show difficulties in learning new construction patterns, which necessitates an awareness and formal teaching of communication strategies.

Keywords: *Strategic Competence, Linguistic Forms, Mother Tongue Influence, Interactive Efficiency.*

Introduction

A second language is generally an official or societally dominant language needed for education, employment, and other basic purposes. Second language acquisition is a widely researched area of which, second language pedagogy in the English Language classroom has a sea of literature. While a lot has been urged for the communicative competence and student performance, the individual subsections of communicative competence models that is, linguistic, socio-cultural, discourse, actional and strategic competence need to be contextualized more extensively.

Bearing this issue in mind, this paper tries to contextualize the issue of strategic competence among the adult ESL students in the city of Kolkata, who study a prescribed syllabus under the University of Calcutta, broadly named Communicative English Major, catering to the development of all aspects of communication. Keeping the vocational structure of the course in mind, an attempt has been made to identify the areas of strategic competence demonstrated by the students, along with the extent of reliance on mother tongue, specifically the areas of such reliance. This has been done through real-time classroom observation and investigation as well into the students' attitude to English as a second language, as a social, academic and professional entity.

Research Questions

The paper proceeds with the following research questions in mind:

- What kind of syntactic structures do the students use in the negotiation of meaning in the formal classroom environment?

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- How often do the learners resort to code switching to L1 and what are the common structures of L1 used in such cases?
- What kinds of strategic competence do the students demonstrate in the classroom?
- Are the students actively aware of strategic competence?

Literature Survey

The concept of *communicative competence* came as Dell Hymes' (1972) counter to Chomsky's (1965) idea of *competence* in which he differentiated between *Competence,* the user's knowledge of a language, and *performance*, the actualuse of the language in a real life situation. Hymes believed that Communicative rules of speech acts control language use and the linguistic forms implemented by a language user at any point of time. Hymes proposed four aspects of communicative competence, which comprise elements that are dynamic and interactive:

- grammatical (what is formally possible),
- psycholinguistic (what is feasible in terms of human information processing),
- psycho-cultural (what is the social meaning or value of a given utterance) and
- probabilistic (what actually occurs)

The first comprehensive model of communicative competence was put forward by Michael Canale in collaboration with Merille Swain (1980, 1983). Their work had far-reaching impact on the field of language teaching and evolving pedagogically applicable teaching material. Their model had four parameters as given below:

- Grammatical Competence: the knowledge of the language code (including grammatical rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling etc)
- Sociolinguistic Competence: knowledge of the socio cultural code of language use (appropriacy of vocabulary, register, politeness and style)
- Discourse Competence: ability to retain coherence and cohesion and recognition of genres
- Strategic Competence: knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that enhance the efficiency of communication.

Hymes' theory of Communicative Competence as 'ability for use' has influenced Bachman and Palmer (1990, 1996) to elaborate Canale and Swain's model to create the Communicative Language Ability model based on results in language testing research. This model divides the knowledge of language into two broad sections:

- Organisational knowledge: knowledge of structural elements including:
  - Grammatical knowledge
  - Textual knowledge (discourse competence and rhetorical organisation)
- Pragmatic knowledge: knowledge of "components that enable us to relate words and utterances to their meanings, to the intentions of language users and to relevant characteristics of language use contexts":
  - Lexical knowledge: knowledge of meanings of words and figurative use of language
  - Functional knowledge: knowledge of communicative purposes of language
  - Sociolinguistic knowledge

This paper will theoretically follow the model of Communicative Competence suggested by Celce-Murcia et al (1995), and subsequently by Dornyei and Thurrel (1996), built upon that of Canale and Swain, primarily because the model takes into consideration the pedagogic implications of Language use. Their model "places the discourse component in a position where the lexico-grammatical building blocks, the actional organizing skills of communicative intent, and the sociocultural context come together and shape the discourse…" The strategic competence is defined as the usable list of skills used by a language user in negotiating messages and problem solving. This theory is represented diagrammatically below. It must be noted that all the levels represented are continuously interactive, dynamic and constitutive of each other.
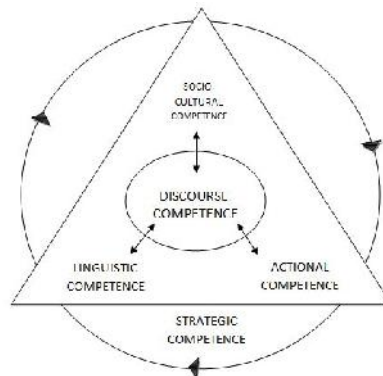
    This model uses the term linguistic competence instead of grammatical competence in order to include unambiguously the lexical and phonological components along with morphology and syntax. It also uses the term socio-cultural competence instead of sociolinguistic competence to essentially differentiate the element of actional competence, which is the knowledge of contextualized language functions. Moreover, it is also their belief that knowledge includes linguistic, actional and discourse components while socio cultural knowledge helps in the successful implementation of this knowledge, and is therefore a separate realm. The five domains of this model are described in brief, starting with discourse competence, which is considered the 'core' competence.

- Discourse Competence is "the selection, sequencing and arrangement of words, structures, sentences and utterances to achieve a unified spoken or written text." It includes an awareness of the following:
  - Cohesion
    - Reference (anaphora, cataphora)
    - Substitution or ellipsis
    - Conjunction
    - Lexical chains related to content schemata and parallel structure
  - Deixis
    - Personal (pronouns)
    - Spatial
    - Temporal
    - Textual
  - Coherence
    - Organised expression and interpretation of content and purpose
    - Thematization and staging
    - Management of old and new information
    - Propositional structures and their organisational sequences
    - Temporal continuity and shift (sequence of tenses)
  - Genre or generic structure
  - Conversational structure (inherent to turn taking system)
  - Linguistic competence consists of the basic elements of communication including:
  - Syntax
  - Morphology
  - Lexicon
  - Phonology
  - Orthography

- Actional competence is defined as the competence in conveying and understanding communicative intent, that is, correlating actional intent to an inventory of expressions carrying illocutionary force. It includes:
  - Knowledge of language functions
    - Interpersonal exchange
    - Information
    - Opinions
    - Feelings
    - Suasion
    - Problems
    - Future scenarios
  - Knowledge of speech act sets
  - Sociocultural competence is the user's knowledge of language appropriacy "within the overall social and cultural context of communication, in accordance with the pragmatic factors related to variation in language use." This forms a part of an individual's identity and social construct. This includes the following components:
  - Social contextual factors
    - Participant variables
    - Situational variables
  - Stylistic appropriateness factors
    - Politeness conventions and strategies
    - Stylistic variation (formality and register)
  - Cultural factors
    - Sociocultural background knowledge of the target language community
      * Living conditions
      * Awareness of major dialectical or regional differences
      * Cross cultural awareness
  - Non-verbal communicative factors
    - Kinesic factors
      * Discourse controlling behaviours (turn taking)
      * Backchannel behaviours
      * Affective markers, gestures, eye contact
    - Proxemics factors (use of space)
    - Haptic factors (touching)
    - Paralinguistic factors
    - Silence

The strategic competence usually comes into play when the linguistic resources of a communicator are indisposed to serve the communicative purpose. These strategies are not only competent in problem solving but also in enhancing communication effectiveness. Corder (1981) divided these strategies into two forms: message adjustment and resource expansion strategies. Based on the functions cited above, strategic competence includes the following components as per Celce-Murcia et al model (1995):

- Avoidance or reduction strategies
  - Message replacement
  - Topic avoidance
  - Message abandonment
- Achievement or compensatory strategies
  - Circumlocution
  - Approximation
  - All-purpose words
  - Non-linguistic means

- ▪ Restructuring
- ▪ Word-coinage
- ▪ Literal translation from L1
- ▪ Foreignizing
- ▪ Code switching from L2 to L1 or L3
- ▪ Retrieval
- Stalling or time gaining strategies
  - ▪ Fillers, hesitation devices & gambits
  - ▪ Self and other repetition
- Self-monitoring strategies
  - ▪ Self-initiated repairs
  - ▪ Self-rephrasing
- Interactional strategies
  - ▪ Appeals for help
  - ▪ Meaning negotiation strategies
  - ▪ Indicators of non/misunderstanding
- Requests- repetition, clarification, confirmation
- Verbal/ non-verbal expressions
- Interpretive summary
- Responses- rephrasing, reduction, expansion, rejection, repair
- Comprehension checks

Methodology

- **Target Group of the Study**

The learners that form the target group of this study are learners of Communicative English Major, a course run under the aegis of the University of Calcutta since 1994. It is a three-year vocational degree course, targeting the implementation of employability skills in students. The course is presently run in seven colleges affiliated to the university and the demand for the course is fairly high among students each year. The students targeted for the study belong to all the levels of the course, the first, second and third years

The study proceeded by means of direct classroom observation as a part of action research. The data for analysis was based mostly on the classroom spoken discourse. The data collection proceeded through classroom audio recording. The process was initiated by action research and mainly followed these steps:

- ▪ Collection of data from learners who are responding to a task or test, usually based on simulated situations, collected over a period of three months of active classes.
- ▪ Determination of elements in the sample of learner language and teacher talk which reflects a pattern showing strategic competence as well as deviances, if any.
- ▪ Accounting for any irregularities in the student language using syntactic parameters as well cross-linguistic influence, caused due to insufficient learning or over/under generalization of the target language structure.
- ▪ Forming a hypothesis about the nature of learners' use of English structures for active communication in formal and professional contexts.

- **Analysis of Data**

The data collected from the students' responses can be categorised into two groups: one forms a one-word response, which is usually used as filler and the second comprises phrases or short sentences where the mixing takes place for particular terms. The data is presented in form of a table below:

Table 1

One word fillers	Phrases/short sentences
• Maane- Bengali- I mean • Matlab- Hindi- I mean • Hya- Bengali- yes • Hena-tena- Bengali- etcetera • Byapar-Bengali- subject • Na- Bengali- not used in the typical Bengali negation sense, but as an emphasizer. Eg. Close the door na or tell na. • Jodi-Bengali- if • Haa to- Hindi- yes, so • Woh- Hindi- that • Ei- Bengali- this (as a reference point) • Jemon- Bengali- for example • Ei/oi r ki- Bengali- this is it • Accha- Bengali- agreement • Jaatah- Bengali- to mean whatever or even used in a derogatory sense of nonsense • Ashole- Bengali- actually • Tarpor- Bengali- next • Uff- Bengali- interjection to convey irritation or exasperation • Aan- Bengali- indicating surprise or as an utterance to request repetoition of question.	• Kya doing?- mixing of Hindi question form 'Kya' meaning what with English continuous verb form 'doing' • Kya karing?- mixing of Hindi question word 'what' with the Hindi verb form of 'do'-'kar' and the English continuous form 'ing' • Because dhor- mixing of Bengali verb 'dhor', which means consider or suppose within the English subordinate conjunction because. • Shift/repeat kor- mixing of English verb forms shift and repeat with Bengali 'do' verb form 'kor' • Kalker exam er preparation Kemon?- this is a typical mixing where the main noun and verb forms are in English, specially words that are important for their academic world. • Next week exam ache- the Bengali auxiliary 'ache' is mixed with English words, which reduces the sentence length as well as the number of words used. • Eta exam er syllabus- note that the demonstrative 'eta' to mean 'this' and the possessive marker 'er' are Bengali terms, the use of which again reduces the sentence length. • Hand-out gulo- mixing of the Bengali plural marker 'gulo' with the English noun form. • Pora complete- Bengali verb 'pora', meaning study acting as a noun here mixing with the English verb complete. • Exact location ta ki ektu help kor.- the Bengali terms used here are 'ta'-possessive marker; 'ki'- meaning what; 'ektu' meaning a little and 'kor' which is the present tense do verb. • Don't you remember oita?- mixing of Bengali demonstrative to mean that thing. • Jemon dhor, you could go to H.C.U- where the Bengali terms 'jemon dhor' for example suppose • Arre oita- Bengali- meaning that thing, 'arre' would signify exasperation. • I find you extremely nyaka- the Bengali term 'nyaka' denotes someone coquettish • I was saying ki its not that important- the Hindi term 'ki' stands for that here. • Janish toh he is the man I was talking about- the Bengali terms 'janish toh' means you know. • This sweater is besh soft- Bengali adverb of degree 'besh' meaning quite. • Ami khub tired feel korchi.- Bengali terms 'ami' stand for I, 'khub' stands for the adverb of degree 'very'; 'korchi' is the continuous verb form 'am doing'.

- **Classroom Observation Data Analysis: Language Production**

      This section concentrates on samples of classroom exchanges, which has been used to study strategic competence for this paper. The activity focused here is a one on one exchange between a teacher and a student, whereby the student is responding to a test or activity, based on a simulated real life situation. It consists of a teacher-learner exchange on the activity of mock interview with second year students. The interview transcripts have been presented in terms of the learners' competence in managing oral communication in English and will be analyzed as per the degree of strategic competence demonstrated.

- This is a mock interview between the teacher and Mithu Santra, a second year student of Communicative English. The mock interview component of the second year practical is for 15 marks. The teacher and student have been represented as T and S respectively for ease of presentation.

T: Tell me something about yourself.

S: My name is Mithu Santra. I am from New Alipore and I am studying, *umm…* studying in Jogamaya Devi College, second year, Communicative English.

T: Yes, what do you want to do after your graduation?

S: I want to be a good teacher, *uhh…* senior secondary.

T: Senior secondary, all right, which means classes 11 and 12?

S: 11, 12 or second year school, secondary teacher or senior secondary teacher.

T: Ok, so you want to teach secondary or senior secondary school. All right, so let's suppose that this is an interview for the post of an English teacher. Ok, why have you chosen to teach in this level?

S: I like to teach and…. I know that the *uhh…* teachers *uhh..* have many holidays in school and *uhh…* I am inspired my school teachers because they teaches very well and… so I choosen this profession…teaching.

T: Ok, so let's say what are your strengths as a teacher?

S: (long uncertain pause, breaks eye contact)

T: Why do you think you are suitable for this profession?

S: Because now I am teaching many students. I have many students so….

T: So you offer private tuitions. Is it the same as teaching in a class?

S: (pause) nods her head to indicate negation.

T: No? Why do you think so?

S: (silence)

T: What is different about classroom teaching?

S: And private teaching?

T: Yes.

S: So…I know about theirs.their mindset, *uhh…* their, their studying and other things.

T: Ok, umm, you would teach English, right? Which area of English do you think the students find the most difficult?

S: *Umm…* (silence), most probably, English writing and grammar.

T: Ok, so writing and grammar. Which area of writing?

S: Dialogue writing, letter writing, report writing.

T: Ok, so how would you make this, you know, the writing skill easier for the students?

S: *Umm…* (long silence, nods to indicate negation)

T: No idea? Ok. What would be your salary expectation from our school?

S: I know that the teachers…*uhh…* about thirty thousand.

T: About thirty thousand? Ok. Where do you see yourself after five years?

S: *Umm..* in a school.

T: As a school teacher? Ok. Thank you Mithu.

(3:26 minutes)

Analysis

The mock interview excerpt between the teacher and the student shows the evident use of the two fillers 'uhh' and 'umm' interspersed with mostly one line answers to the teacher's questions. In case that the student has not been able to answer a particular question, there is silence or the use of gesture to mitigate conversation. However, the student has responded to the rephrasing of questions and has been able to carry on the task without much difficulty. Although there are evident errors, especially in the domain of concord and tenses, it does not impede the conversation. Also, the student has not fallen back on mother tongue to continue the conversation and has resorted to complete silence when unable to frame sentences in the target language. Breaking of eye contact has surfaced as an indication of nervousness. So the strategies used by this student are of the nature of stalling or time gaining devices, hesitation devices like repetition of same word for gaining time, confirmation request where she asks "And private teaching?" and also reduction strategy like message abandonment where she cannot answer the question. The errors in her speech seem to be stemming from a literal translation from L1 such as "I am inspired my school teachers because they teaches very well" and "so I choosen this profession" where the errors are mostly in the domain of concord, use of preposition after the verb 'inspired' and appropriate use of verb forms.

- This is a mock interview between the teacher and Riya Dutta, a second year student of Communicative English.

T: Describe yourself.

S: *Uhh..* my name is Riya Dutta. I am studying in Jogamaya Devi college, Communicative English department.

T: Ok, so what do you want to do in future?

S: *Uhh..* journalist.

T: Print media or electronic media?

S: Print media.

T: Why do you choose print media?

S: *Umm…* I have been choosing, … chosen this field uhh… because, because in print media I can show my skill *uh..* composing or *uh..* verico page etc. (folded hands on lap).

T: So would you like to, you know, take Bangla as your medium or would you like to write in English?

S: *Uh..* Bengali.

T: Bengali. Which Bengali newspaper do you read?

S: Anandabazar Patrika.

T: Ok. Why do you read that?

S: *Uh..* I think it is better than all *uh..* others paper and *uh…* (pauses, looks down, fidgets)

T: Why do you think it is better?

S: *Umm..* (pause) Ananda Patrika is *uh..* standard… standard language umm… (silence).

T: Right…(encouragement)

S: *Umm…* (long silence)

T: And what else?

S: *Umm…* (silence)

T: Ok, so you think it's very standard in language and so you have chosen Anandabazar Patrika. Which aspect of news would you like to cover? What kind of news?

S: *Umm…* accidental reports.

T: Accident reports? Why do you think it is important to cover accident reports?

S: I think it is, *umm*, it is *umm….* Experience and *umm.. uh..uh..*(wonders)

T: Why is it important? Why do you think people need to know about accidents?

S: *and uh..* very challenging to collect accidental reports *and uh..*

T: The data?

S: Train accident, bus accident etc *uh..*

T: Ok. What is your strength?

S: *Uh.. uh…* (silence)

T: As a person, what is your strength?

S: (silence) Well manner, good behaviour and politeness to my parents, my family, my teachers, my friends. (leans forward and shrugs to indicate that's all).

T: Ok, so you're a well behaved and polite person. Do you think this is a good quality to have in the media field?

S: *Uh..* yes.

T: Why?

S: (silence)

T: How will it help you to collect news and accident reports?

S: *Umm..* I think.. *umm… ki bolbo… mone porche na….* (Bengali- What do I say? Can't remember).

T: You're not sure? Ok. Thank you Riya.

(3:47 minutes)

Analysis

This excerpt also shows the use of fillers like 'uh' and 'umm' like the previous one but the frequency of the use is greater. The answers to the teacher's questions have been given in one word and small phrases. There is also a complete breakdown of communication flow when the student does not respond appropriately to the teacher's question and abandons the message altogether. None of the responses have been complete sentences and there have been long periods of silence. Evident uses of gestures to aid conversation flow are lacking but the body language used is mainly to indicate nervousness, such as breaking eye contact or fidgeting, or to indicate end of a statement. The student does respond to rephrasing the question. However, there is a complete dependence on mother tongue when the student has run out of ideas, mostly due to nervousness.

- Following is a mock interview situation between the teacher and Shreya Choudhury, a second year student of Communicative English.

T: Ok, tell me something about yourself.

S: My name is Shreya Chowdhury and currently I'm studying in Jogamaya Devi College, Communicative English and I want to become, *I think* I want to become, *right now,uh..* a spot journalist.

T: A spot journalist? You mean a fi…

S: A field reporter.

T: All right, so, what has influenced you, you know, to pursue this line?

S: Actually, right from when I was a child*, umm..,* my parents don't really watch a lot of serials, so they were all about news, news, news (rolls hands over and over again) and when I just saw the people*, you know,* they were standing in the rain, and storm, *and uh…* they were, you know, like *uh.. dangas* (Hindi- Riots) and everything, everything was going and they were just still there. It just made me want to be there. *Uhh..* since I want to be a part of that, the adventure really *uh..* just made me want to become that (forward hand movement), I didn't know what to do. (louder voice, wrist movement forward). In class twelve I didn't understand what to do (shrugs) and I took up science and then when I came to college I was supposed to study something else and …. By chance I got into this…. *Uh*, this field and now this *uh…* really makes me feel I'm going towards my dream, which I, which I (rolling hands) actually wanted to become as a child….

T: Hmm, hmm. (encouragement)

S: I actually feel I'm going towards that.

T: So, based on your experience as a child, uh, which particular news reporting did have a long lasting effect on you?

S: *Uh…* a particular one?

T: Yeah.

S: An incident that was… (moves hands)?

T: Yeah.

S: There was this one incident, *uh,* we had no colour T.V at that time, it was a black and white small T.V (moves hands to form a small square) and we couldn't really watch it properly and *uh*, the tsunami was going on and *uh*, the reporters standing there (moves hands definitively to indicate place) reporting the entire thing, they didn't care about whether they're going to die or live or whether the wave is going to crash them away *or something,* they didn't care about

anything, they were standing there and they conti…(rolls hands forward to indicate an on-going process) and continuously we were updated about everything

T: Hmm

S: Through T.V, through radio but as in radio they were not updated for everything but the field reporters, they were on spot, *uh*, doing everything just for their job, they were so passionate about their job and that one tsunami incident really *umm…*

T: Influenced you?

S: Influenced me. (nods in agreement)

T: All right, so what characteristics of a reporter would you like to, you know, say you have or would like to imbibe in yourself?

S: *Ok,* I think I should really start becoming more courageous, because *uh*, the moment I see a brawl somewhere I want to go away (moves hands sideways) but I want to become that courageous that I stand there and I report whatever is happening and I'm actually not very camera friendly, so I want to become (rolls hands) I want to become things that I'm not. I want to inf..influence myself, I want to stand in front of the camera, speak fluently, stand in front of the brawl and speak everything. That is something I really want myself to do..*uh*..

T: Imbibe?

S: Imbibe in myself, yes.

T: Ok, so courage is one thing, what other qualities does a field reporter require?

S: (thinks) Fluency

T: Ok

S: *Uh*, the courage is mentioned.

T: Yes

S: And *uh*, really active.

T: Ok..? (probing glance)

S: Active …. And should be, not just active physically but *uh*, should be very active in general, know where everything is going on because when we go for a job I don't think there'll be people who'll be very helpful to us, uh, informing us, they'll always try to put us down, so we'll have to be active our own self *je* (Bengali- that) where things are happening and to reach there on time, so that is punctuality and if we reach there after everything is done, then we won't get anything. Teacher's phone rings. She dismisses it.

T: Sorry, continue.

S: *Ki bolchilam, bhule gechi* (flustered and disoriented) (Bengali- What was I saying? I have forgotten)

T: Punctuality and what else?

S: Punctual and *uh*…. Updated about and *uh*… I think it's very important that when you're reporting something (moves hands as a reference) most reporters go for a political view. I want to avoid that because political view will always, always, always have a negative side.

T: So what is that quality called?

S: (uncertain silence)

T: Objectivity. You don't want to be subjective when you want to report something. Ok, thank you Shreya.

S: Thanks.

(4:25 minutes)

Analysis

This excerpt clearly shows that the student possesses good strategic competence. There is clear use of fillers such as 'uh', 'umm', 'I think..', 'actually', 'You know..'. The range of fillers is greater and the student speaks in descriptive, complex sentences. The speech is interspersed with simultaneous use of various body language and gestures which are meant to carry the conversation smoothly as well as to bring about a greater emphasis and impact to her point. Also the teacher has had to contribute little to the conversation apart from asking questions. The student shows command over herself as she asks for clarification questions quite often, before responding to the teacher's queries. She resorts to mother tongue or Indian language dependence but it is only in very few cases, one is the use of the common Hindi term *dangas* to mean riots, or the use of the Bengali filler *Je* to mean 'that', used more as a discourse particle, and the other is when she tries to gain her stance back in the conversation after being

interrupted. However, when the code switching to Bengali or Hindi does take place it is to ensure the smoothness of communication. The student also demonstrates compensatory strategies like repetition of the same word (for example, always, news, everything) to create emphasis, retrieval from her lexicon when she says "inf…influence" or "conti… (hand movement) continuously"; restructuring and circumlocution as she wants to present her case well.

- **Reflection of Strategic Competence in Learner Language**

This section deals with the subcategories of strategic competence reflected in the speech of the ESL learners as found in the survey and classroom observation. It will be following the detailed categorization of strategic competence as given by Celce-Murcia and Dornyei(1995) in their model of communicative competence. It will first dwell on the strategies shown by the learners evidently and then highlight the ones that are not demonstrated by the learners.

It is important to remember at this point that students use communication strategies both for problem solving as well as to ensure the effectiveness and smoothness of their communication. The first and evident strategy used by all students is the stalling or time gaining strategy that includes fillers such as 'uh', 'umm' as the most common ones, together with 'you know', 'I think', 'actually', 'what I mean is' etc. The point to note here is that while most of the adult learners use these fillers in the second language, they also tend to strongly use fillers in their mother tongue (such as 'ki'- Hindi 'that', 'Je'- Bengali 'that') in the midst of target language use, specially signposts of the nat of extending an argument. Many students have been seen using repetition as a stalling device, both self and the teachers' remarks in an attempt to get time to think and phrase their next point. A few students, usually not very comfortable with oral communication have been observed using reduction strategies in which they either tend to directly avoid the topic through gestures or through digressive speech, or to abandon the topic of discussion altogether.

Almost all students use the self-monitoring strategies in which they correct themselves after making a wrong statement and the process is self-initiated often just by the use of the word 'sorry' or for more confident speakers by the use of the phrase 'what I mean is'. Also, the confident speakers tend to be very descriptive in their speech and over-elaborate their point to ensure that the listener understands the point made. Interactional and meaning negotiation strategies are also commonly used among the students, especially in case of appeals for help or clarification or confirmation requests, where the students try to confirm their understanding of the domain and requirements of a question before they answer it. Some learners perform comprehension checks using questions in rising tone to check the interlocutor's awareness of an issue. The learners tend to express their incomprehension of an issue or question through puzzled or blank expressions, or even through admissions that they cannot recall their points or do not have anything else to say on a particular topic. This is done both through body language and by resorting to mother tongue, non-verbal and verbal means. In case of responses while negotiating meaning, the learners tend to perform confirmation and rejection functions well, but only fluent speakers can expand, reduce and rephrase their argument for maximum effectiveness.

The achievement or compensatory strategy is an area well used by the adult ESL learners in Kolkata. However, there is a distinction in the use, in that while the competent speakers show mastery over most of the components of this strategy, the struggling speakers mostly show competence in a few areas. One of these areas is a literal translation from the mother tongue, which might result in linguistic errors but ensures the communication goal. The capable speakers, having some language resource in the English language, however, do not translate literally from their mother tongue. They code switch to their mother tongue or even a third language, in this case Hindi, for many speakers, without halting the flow of conversation, enabling successful conveying of message. Some successful speakers resort to circumlocution or round about expressions to express a word they are failing to recall, as well as retrieval, word coinages, whereby the speakers combine words from mother tongue and English to create a new word and restructuring their argument. However, the strategies of approximation (substituting the word closest in meaning), all-purpose words and foreignizing (L1 word with L2 pronunciation) have not been observed in the adult ESL students in the study.

An area of communication strategy, which is compensatory in nature and is greatly used by students is the non-linguistic means of gestures, pointing and body language. Gestures in common parlance denote manual movements that substitute speech, for example, when someone waves to indicate goodbye. However, the focus of this section is on gestures, which occur along with speech, called 'gesticulation' by McNeill (1992). Gesticulations serve to enhance and intensify the meaning denoted by speech and as per McNeill and Duncan (2000, quoted in Lantolf and Thorne, 2006) gestures are 'material carriers of thinking' that 'provide an enhanced window into mental processes. The gestures

that commonly co-occur with speech comprise iconics, metaphorics, beats and deictics (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). Iconics are gestures that simulate movement or objects. Metaphoric gestures are used to refer to abstract ideas. Beats denote abrupt up and down hand movement that occur simultaneously and quite often with speech and finally deictics are used to point at objects in the world.

An investigation into the nature of gestures as a part of communication compensatory strategy among the ESL learners here during viva voce and interview tasks revealed that the most commonly used gesticulations used by the students was beats and iconics. However, the two types were used to two entirely different effects. While beats are used by more confident learners to substantiate or magnify their argument, iconics is used in case they had problems in proper expression or lack of adequate vocabulary. So, if we refer to the classroom observation data of the previous section a confident speaker like Shreya uses both beats and iconics while a lesser confident speaker, Mithu uses iconics, and a poor speaker like Riya would use none. This has also been observed that a learner having a greater mastery over the language tends to gesticulate more, while a nervous speaker often fidgets and merely nods or would sit absolutely straight. Beats can also occur when a learner is trying to recall a word from the mental lexicon. Using gestures during speech clearly establishes a growing relation between the learners' thought process and expression.

Mother tongue intervention and L2 use: frequency and irregularity

This section will mostly concentrate on the frequency of the mother tongue use and the nature of such use, mostly based on the data collected in response to the question 18 of the language attitude questionnaire given to the students. This section will concentrate on a few sample exchanges taken from the data chart and try to analyze the terms of the mother tongue intervention in the English language use by the target group learners of 18-21 years.

- *Kya* doing? – this particular utterance is quite commonly used in the student community where the question word in Hindi 'kya' meaning 'what' is coupled with the English continuous 'do' verb. This is used quite in the colloquial sense and not in the formal parlance.

- Handout *gulo*- this is a form which combines the English word handout with the Bengali plural marker 'gulo', and this is done in many cases to pluralise non-living objects, for example, 'bus gulo', in which the English noun bus is pluralised by adding the Bengali plural marker 'gulo'. This is used both in the popular and formal classroom contexts by the students.

- I was saying *ki* its important- one of the most frequent forms of mixing takes place in the domain of conjunctions, where the students use the Hindi conjunction 'ki', meaning 'that' to join two clauses. Similarly, the Bengali conjunction 'Je' is used in a similar sense by the students and sometimes both these conjunction forms are combined by students- 'ki je' almost in a reduplicated sense to stall for time or as a habit.

- I find you extremely *nyaka*- now this example is something, which shows a cultural reliance on the mother tongue. The Bengali word 'nyaka' denotes someone who is coquettish. But the cultural rootedness of the word is such that the English correlative cannot be used because it does not spring to mind, especially in spontaneous oral communication, and also it is not entirely synonymous. Other examples of these culturally motivated words could be those related to festivities, for example, 'puja/pujo' (Hindi and Bengali respectively);

Thus, it can be seen the mother tongue intervention among ESL learners of the age group 18-21 in Kolkata is both conscious and unconscious. It is conscious when the students use the mother tongue or a third language word deliberately to create colloquialism, or when they use words when the cultural supplements are not available in the English language. The unconscious use mostly takes place in the domain of fillers and communication strategies when the students use mother tongue words such as 'ki', 'je', 'matlab', 'maane', quite unconsciously when their English substitutes are not available. Besides, the English fillers such as 'you know', 'I think', 'what I mean is' are mostly used by competent speakers of the English language, a majority using merely the forms of 'uh' and 'umm', which cannot be classified as being purely English fillers, being in the nature of sound articulations, rather than meaningful words. In situations of duress the students resort to mother tongue fillers.

Conclusion

The overview of various levels of communicative competence focused in the model of Celce-Murcia et al (1995) shows that the adult ESL learners in Kolkata, barring a few are quite competent in the linguistic domain, the problem area highlighted being the lexicon comprising new and adequate content words, collocations, formulaic and semi-formulaic word chunks used as phatic expressions. The students are well-trained in actional competence and socio-cultural competence, and some of this training is aided

by their world and cultural knowledge. A few students display problems in cohesiveness of expression, specially organized expression, and interpretation of content and purpose, organizational sequences and temporal continuity and shift. However, the students have displayed quite a good amount of strategic competence, especially in the domains of time gaining, compensatory and reduction strategies.

The main problem in oral communication in English that emerged from the learners was in the area of fluency, a term that is related to speech and language production. It subsumes the learners' ability to 'link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation' (Hedge, 2014). A knowledge of strategic competence helps the learners to overcome this problem in fluency. Fluency is a largely evolving and a liquid entity in a student's repertoire of language that helps him or her to make the best possible use of the language resource available to him or her at a given point of time. However, as the classroom observation data has shown, fluent students also exhibit the greatest strategy use, aiding them to express themselves appropriately and uninhibitedly. 5.1 Implications for ESL pedagogy and syllabus design with special reference to Communicative English Major

A close inspection of the syllabus of Communicative English Major would prove that the syllabus is mostly designed for incorporating vocational skills in the students. Deviating from traditional English teaching, the syllabus focusses on the developing the performance of the learners in real life situations. The syllabus is mostly concerned with improving the learners' knowledge of the basics of pronunciation, grammar, business correspondence, project planning and writing skills. The practical components are based on the knowledge of the functional and cultural knowledge of the English language. Although there is adequate scope for pair and group work, and interaction promoted by the syllabus itself, there are no direct activities for communication strategy training for the learners. As a result, this component is not really taught to the learners following regimented training exercises. The strategic competence displayed by the learners, is not really a reflection of classroom exercises and tasks. As a result, the students who are fluent, or confident, carry their expertise into their oral communication. The students who are not predisposed in this domain invariably lack fluency and face difficulty in tackling performance based oral language production tasks. Strategy training needs to be ingrained into the syllabus design of this course in order to ensure greater fluency in students.

This study has confirmed my hypothesis largely that students displaying strategic competence have had a previous experience with their mother tongue which is aided by their exposure to the language and their inherent confidence as a speaker and the ability to take risks. An open mind and eagerness to accept challenges, and participate in greater formal and informal interaction helps students to acquire greater confidence, better strategies to express and hence better fluency. This study has also underlined the significance of developing target-oriented tasks to teach communication strategies as a part of their functional curriculum in order to be able to function in the second language better. In the words of Celce-Murcia (1995) "Such strategy instruction might involve raising learner awareness about the nature and communicative potential of communication strategies… providing L2 models of the use of certain communication strategies; teaching communication strategies directly by presenting learners with linguistic devices to verbalize them; providing opportunities for learners to practice strategy use."   In other words, the ESL students need realistic teachable models of strategic competence to enhance the efficacy of communication potential that rests within them.

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