Communication Strategies: An Empirical Analysis With Retrospection

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Abstract

The use of communication strategies has been characterized as an integral part of communicative competence, involving attempts by a speaker to communicate his/her message in spite of linguistic limitations. A recent study of 44 Hungarian learners of English yielded data on over 60 different types of coping devices, including risk avoidance, achievement, stopgap, and stalling strategies, as well as interactional strategies used by both speaker and listener to sort out confusion in communication. This presentation will illustrate a large number of communication strategies through examples from the Hungarian study. In addition, we will discuss the critical role of native language retrospections in identifying specific strategies.

Introduction

Ever since Váradi’s pioneering study in 1973, second language acquisition researchers have known that L2 communication can be characterized in part by a set of systematic phenomena, termed communication strategies (CSs), whose main function is to handle difficulties or breakdowns in communication. In fact, even a brief analysis of any spontaneous piece of L2 oral discourse will reveal that the role of CSs in L2 users’ verbal performance is highly salient: these speakers (except for those at a very advanced, "near-native" level) tend to spend a great deal of time and effort negotiating their meaning and struggling to make up for their L2 deficiencies. Savignon’s (1972, 1983) and Canale and Swain’s (1980) investigations of communicative language knowledge and use made CSs a recognized component of communicative competence, and a series of research studies, following the initial work of Varadi (1973), Tarone (1977), Faerch and Kasper (1983a), and Bialystok (1983), identified a number of different CSs and organized them into various taxonomies (for a review, see Bialystok, 1990; Ellis, 1994; Poulisse, 1987).

Originally CSs were conceived as verbal and non-verbal problem-solving devices, used to overcome communication difficulties and to compensate for the speaker’s deficiencies in any of the components of communicative competence (cf. Canale and Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1972, 1983; Varadi, 1973). This view is expressed by Faerch and Kasper’s (1983a) well-known definition: “Communication strategies are potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal” (p. 36).

Tarone (1980) conceptualized CSs somewhat differently. According to her, CSs “relate to a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared” (p. 420). This definition is potentially broader than Faerch and Kasper’s (1983a) by introducing an interactional perspective; in Tarone words, “CS are seen as tools used in a joint negotiation of meaning where both interlocutors are attempting to agree as to a communicative goal” (p. 420). This interactional perspective would allow for the inclusion of various repair mechanisms which, according to Tarone, may be considered communication strategies if the intention is “to clarify intended meaning rather than simply correct linguistic form” (p. 424). Even though Tarone herself never extended the scope of actual CS types listed in her taxonomy beyond the coping devices one can rely on when lacking linguistic resources in communicating a meaning (i.e., she never listed trouble-shooting mechanisms which can be used to deal with problems that have already surfaced in the course of communication, e.g., clarification requests), other researchers did specifically list meaning negotiation strategies among CSs (e.g., Canale, 1983; Rost & Ross, 1991; Rubin, 1987; Willems, 1987).

In addition, Dornyei (1995) argued CSs should concern any language-related problem that speakers
encounter during the process of communication and therefore should also include stalling strategies (e.g., the conscious use of fillers, gambits, and hesitation devices), whose function is to gain time to think and keep the communication channel open in the face of difficulties—a point also mentioned by other researchers (e.g., Canale, 1983; Haastrop and Phillipson, 1983; Rubin, 1987; Savignon, 1983).

The purpose of the present study was to bring together several lines of research and provide a systematic overview of problem management in L2 communication. Based on a corpus obtained from 44 EFL learners using three elicitation tasks and a retrospection phase, we provide an extensive list of problem-solving devices with their definitions, actual examples, and retrospective comments where available. We then discuss the main subcategories of these and the contribution of retrospection in their identification.

Method

Subjects:
Participants were 44 Hungarian learners of English, ages 15-25, half of them at an intermediate level, the other half at a postintermediate (preadvanced) level. Of these participants 22 were females, 22 males. They were selected on a familiarity basis from our research assistants’ EFL classes, so that we had some personal contact with all of them, which ensured willing cooperation.

Procedures:
The data collection sessions were conducted on a one-to-one basis by a group of research assistants who were graduate students enrolled in a course on CSs offered by one of the authors. The subjects were asked to perform three different oral tasks and to participate in a follow-up retrospection interview, all of which were recorded on audio tape. In order to standardize the data-collecting procedures, we prepared for the research assistants a training video and a folder containing printed materials for each task, including instruction sheets and visual props. All the recordings (including those of the retrospection) were transcribed by the research assistants following a transcription guideline sheet. Afterwards, one author went through every recording and corrected the transcripts where necessary.

Speech Elicitation Tasks:
The three oral tasks the participants were asked to do were as follows:

**Cartoon Description:** Participants were asked to describe in English the content of two cartoon strips (featuring Minnie Mouse and Mickey Mouse), each consisting of 3 pictures.

**Definition Formulation:** Participants were given 5 words in their L1 that did not have obvious translations into English and were asked to provide a definition or an explanation of them in English.

**Guided Role-Play:** Participants were asked to act out the role of Mr./Mrs. Gardner in the following situation:

One Saturday morning, while washing the dishes, Mr./Mrs. Gardner notices that the drain of the sink has become blocked. When he/she tries to take the elbow pipe apart so as to clean it, the screw threads break. He/she calls a plumber on the phone and tries to explain what has gone wrong. The plumber asks several technical questions before agreeing to come.

Participants were given all the instructions and background information for the role-play in their L1 on a cue card. The plumber’s role was taken by the interviewer, who also had detailed instructions, including the questions he/she had to ask. The instructions were designed in a way that the interviewees had to explain things they were likely to lack some words for or were asked questions that contained some very difficult words (e.g., *Have you got the rubber washer?*) in order to elicit negotiation of meaning. Participants were asked beforehand not to give up or switch over to their L1 even if they found the task too difficult, but rather to try and get their message through in English.

**Retrospection:**
The inclusion of retrospection in our research design was inspired by Poulisse, Bongaerts, and Kellerman’s (1987) study in which they provided an analysis of the use of retrospection in their CS research. In order to insure the accuracy of the procedure, we tried to follow as closely as possible the guidelines described in Poulisse et al., namely that the data should be collected immediately after the performance without actually forewarning the participants, and the subjects should be provided with contextual information to activate their memories. For the latter purpose we played the recording of the oral tasks to the participants and recorded their comments on a second cassette recorder. We tried to avoid asking...
questions as much as possible by encouraging the participants to volunteer comments, but when they appeared to skip through something the interviewer considered potentially important, he/she asked nonleading questions relating to the specific language phenomenon.

**Data Analysis:**

After the recordings (including both tasks and retrospections) had been transcribed, both of us went through the transcripts individually, examining every instance when we suspected that some sort of problem-solving language behavior occurred, that is, when (a) the speaker appeared to deviate from the "ideal delivery" (Clark & Clark, 1977, p. 261), (b) a seemingly inappropriate lexical item was used, or (c) some basic information given to the participants was altered or ignored. After marking and naming every instance we believed a problem-oriented coping device (referred to as a "CD" in future) was used, we went through the texts together and compared our markings. A critical question was what should be done when there was a disagreement between our markings. Poulisse et al. (1987) achieved consistency by accepting only those cases as CSs which were identified by two judges independently. This method, however, excludes some real CSs which one judge overlooks by mistake. Because our intention was to give a comprehensive account of all the occurring CDs, we decided to discuss each ambiguous case until we came to a joint decision.

After the identification procedures, both of us separately went through the texts again and coded the identified CDs on record sheets. While we were doing so, some further questions arose, which we again discussed together. Lastly, a final summary chart for each subject's speech was prepared by comparing the two separate record sheets; the few instances where the two charts did not coincide were checked against the transcripts.

During the whole process we kept a research logbook, in which we documented every decision we took and every technical issue that had arisen, as well as the thoughts, concerns, and insights that emerged during our discussions. Looking back, we realize this logbook has proven to be invaluable in maintaining the systematicity of our project and it formed the basis for most of the ideas presented in this paper.

**Reliability of the Identification of CDs**

Because our data involved frequencies of the CDs, traditional, correlation-based reliability coefficients describing the consistency of the identification process were not appropriate for our purpose. Instead, we obtained a reliability ratio by dividing the number of agreements between the two authors in identifying a particular CD with the total number of CDs identified. Perfect reliability would have been present when both raters independently identified all true instances, and neither identified any nonexistent devices. In this case the ratio would have been 100%. This ratio was computed for the total sum of CDs (see Table 1), except that we did not count the reliability of lengthened sounds, repetitions, and umming and erring, because these were unambiguously marked by the transcribers; in addition, because only one of us spoke the L1 of the subjects, we also omitted L1-based devices from the reliability calculations. See Table 1 in the appendix.

The figures shown in Table 1 confirmed our feelings that the identification procedure was not very reliable. Although we showed a steady improvement during the six weeks the process took (see the ratios calculated for different subsamples in Table 1), even with the last five transcripts analyzed we only reached a 65% agreement ratio. It is important to note that this ratio was calculated on the basis of our first individual analysis of the transcripts, which was followed by several discussion and checking phases; therefore, the final figures reported in this paper most likely reflect more reliable categorizations. Still, we would have expected higher figures in such a systematic inquiry.

What caused these rather disappointing figures? We believe that it was not so much the "human factor" (i.e., errors in recording or tabulating information), since we took every care to be thorough. Rather, there were a number of sources of unreliability inherent in our research.

1. We set up significantly more categories of CDs than in previous research studies reported in the literature and split certain categories into smaller subunits (e.g., there were four subcategories under code switching). This resulted in 60 units in all and therefore very small differences in our identification (e.g., putting down a strategy as one CD type but a different sub-type) counted as disagreements, thus depressing our reliability.

2. Very often disagreement did not stem from identifying a certain CD differently, but rather from one of us overlooking the phenomenon during the original, individual analysis. The reason for the relatively high frequency of these cases may lie in the fact that in the analysis, very often one has to ignore form (i.e., interlanguage errors)
and the micro-level of language use, and instead focus on content and speaker intent, that is, on the macro-level. On the other hand, with some strategies, and with subcategories in particular, it is really the form which is revealing. Thus both the tree and the forest have to be observed at the same time, and sometimes a structure in the immediate context suggests a different strategy that from observing it within a much larger context.

3. For effective work, a native speaker of the participants' L1 and a native speaker of the L2 must take part in the analysis (as was the case with us); this means, however, that some inconsistencies stem from insufficient knowledge of the other language.

4. The exploratory nature of our analysis also reduced reliability in the cases when a new type/subtype of CD was detected by only one of us. Because these strategies were discovered after the training sessions, experience in their identification could be obtained only during the marking process, which was already part of the reliability study.

5. Another source of unreliability is when interpretation requires knowledge of a L3, which is not shared by the two raters, and therefore one might identify the L3 strategy as an "ordinary" strategy (e.g., approximation or word coinage).

6. We found that in quite a few cases British and American English differences also reduced reliability (one rater considered something a strategy whereas it was acceptable usage in the other language variation).

7. The lack of a video recording also reduced reliability since we could not rely on nonverbal signs.

8. As we will see, sometimes it was difficult to tell a mistake from a consciously used CD, which resulted in numerous initial disagreements.

In sum, we have found that it was very difficult to produce consistent identifications of CDs. As mentioned previously, we believe the fact that our final categorizations were based on extensive discussion yielded more reliable results than could have been obtained by one researcher working alone. Consequently, we recommend that studies examining communication strategy use include a retrospection phase (for reasons given below), follow strict categorization procedures, and involve the efforts of two or more researchers.

**Inventory of Coping Devises in our Corpus**

Table 2 lists all the different types of CDs that were identified in our corpus, their descriptions/definitions, actual examples, and/or quotations from the retrospection (if available) to provide validation for each CD category. During the analysis we distinguished more than 50 categories; about 40 percent of these are well-known CSs or subcategories of these (e.g., literal translation and code switching have several subtypes); another 30 percent of them have been discussed in studies on repair, the negotiation of meaning, and hesitation phenomena; about 15 percent are CDs that have been mentioned in the CS literature but which are either arguable or not widely known, and finally we identified seven new CD types. 3

Table 3 contains the raw frequencies of the CDs in the corpus. However, some of the CDs were associated with interactional language use and therefore could occur only in the last of the three tasks, the only one which contained two-way communication. In order to obtain measures which were comparable across tasks, special CD coefficients were computed by dividing the raw frequencies of a CD type for each person by the total number of words for the speech sample it occurred in and multiplying this figure by one hundred. Thus, for each CD type we obtained a coefficient which described its relative frequency rate per one hundred words in a participant's speech. The means and standard deviations of these coefficients are presented in Column 2.

Note that the CDs in the tables are grouped into three higher-order categories (direct, indirect, and interactional) that will be analyzed later. See tables 2 and 3 in the appendix.

**Contribution of Retrospection**

Our experience with the retrospection procedure is similar to previous findings in that this technique is a very useful addition to other research methods as it increases the number of unambiguously identifiable CDs, allows elimination of incorrectly identified CDs, and helps validate many of the CD categories set up. In addition, in the identification of some CD types, **message reduction** in particular, we relied almost entirely on retrospective data. Retrospection, however, is not an infallible method since retrospective data are incomplete and sometimes inaccurate (see Poulisse et al., 1987, and Cook, 1993, for reviews). As DeKeyser (1988) concludes, "Clear introspective data cannot be obtained for all instances of CS, ... and there may be a certain risk of bias in the sense that subjects find it easier to report and explain certain types of CS than others" (p. 113). On the other hand, retrospection is invaluable in
that the type of information we obtain through it cannot be obtained through other methods.

When analyzing the retrospective data, we found that few comments were made about obvious cases of CDs such as obvious circumlocutions or codeswitching; neither were meaning negotiation sequences discussed a great deal probably because these sequences are rather explicit in handling a problem. A second issue we experienced concerned reliability, a more basic controversy about retrospection. As has been mentioned, for the sake of reliability, retrospection should come immediately after the data collection stage. At this point, however, the interviewer has not been able to analyze the transcripts yet and, as we have found, it is only after a thorough examination of the text that the more subtle problem areas can be identified and the best questions can be formulated. This was true in our study, in which several CD types were identified and defined during the data analysis stage only, and therefore the interviewers were not aware of these CDs at the time of the retrospections.

In spite of these reservations, an impressive amount of retrospective data was accumulated. Columns 4 and 5 in Table 3 contain the frequency of cases when retrospection (a) confirmed an identified CD or (b) helped us discover a CD which remained unidentified during the analysis of the transcripts. A total of 269 CDs were confirmed and 194 CDs were discovered through retrospection. There were also 62 cases (not indicated in the table) in which an incorrectly identified CD was rejected on the basis of retrospective comments, since it turned out that no strategic language use occurred (as in the case of mistakes).

Characteristics of the Coping Devices Identified

All the CDs identified in our corpus were related to communication problems; however, as we argued earlier, they do not make up a uniform set of speech events. Each CD can be placed in a subgroup according to the type of language problem it is intended to handle and the type of problem-management it offers.

Type of Language Problem

If we examine the type of the language problems the CDs are associated with, four main categories can be distinguished: resource deficits, processing time pressure, own-performance problems, and other-performance problems.

Resource Deficits concern gaps in the speakers’ L2 knowledge which prevent them from verbalizing a planned message. CDs related to resource deficits, and to the lack of lexical items in particular, have traditionally been the focus of CS research. Members of the Nijmegen group, for example, explicitly limited the scope of their investigation to lexical compensatory strategies (Kelkerman, 1991), but even with other researchers who never made such a claim, the majority of CD types analyzed fell under this category.

Processing Time Pressure concerns the L2 speaker's frequent need for more time to process and plan L2 speech than would be naturally available in fluent, real-life communication. As Pawley and Syder (1983) argue, fluency in spontaneous speech may take the adult L2 learner years to achieve; in some difficult communication situations (e.g., when required to express one's thoughts on an unfamiliar subject), even native speakers experience the “intense mental activity” that goes on at such times, the struggle to “think of what to say,” to “find the right words” or to “express oneself clearly” (p. 200), and nonnative speakers carry the additional burden of having to construct their messages with limited L2 knowledge and skills. No wonder L2 speakers often lose their “communication footing”; it is at these times that CDs related to processing-time pressure come in very handy in providing the time to sort things out, to get back “on-line,” and to plan ahead.

Own-Performance Problems are detected by the learner during the continuous process of monitoring his/her own speech and can involve three types: (a) the realization that one said something incorrect, (b) the realization that what one said was less than perfect, and (c) uncertainty about whether what one said was correct or conveyed the intended message. The most well-known linguistic category related to such problems is "self-repair," which has been the topic of much research in discourse analysis (in conversation analysis in particular, e.g., Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977).

Other-Performance Problems concern problems caused by the interlocutor’s speech in the speaker and can be divided into three subtypes depending on what the speaker finds problematic: (a) something perceived to be incorrect, (b) lack or uncertainty of understanding something fully, or (c) a lack of some expected message/response.

In Table 4 we list the CD types which fall under each of the four problem areas; in the last two categories we also indicate which of the three
subtypes the phenomenon was associated with. See Table 4 in the appendix.

**Type of Problem-Management**

CDs are diverse not only in what kind of problem they are to handle but also in the way they contribute to resolving conflicts and achieving mutual understanding. From this perspective three basic categories can be separated: *direct*, *indirect*, and *interactional* devices. The first two types involve noninteractional approaches to overcoming communication problems; that is, the speaker manages without outside help.

**Direct** CDs provide an alternative, manageable means of overcoming the problem and getting the (sometimes modified) meaning across, as with a circumlocution compensating for the lack of a word.

**Indirect** CDs are not problem-solving devices in the strict sense as they do not provide alternative-meaning structures themselves, but facilitate the conveyance of meaning indirectly by creating the conditions for achieving mutual understanding at times of difficulty. This might happen by preventing breakdowns and keeping the communication channel open (e.g., fillers, feigning understanding) or by indicating that *less-than-perfect* forms are used which require extra effort to understand (strategy markers).

**Interactional** CDs involve a third approach to problem management whereby the participants carry out trouble-shooting exchanges cooperatively (e.g., clarification request and response sequences), and therefore mutual understanding is a function of the successful execution of both pair parts of the exchange. In Tables 2, 3, and 4-6 we listed the CDs identified in our study according to one of the three categories they belong to.

**Conclusion**

In this study we were able to obtain a fairly comprehensive inventory of communication strategies through the use of varying elicitation tasks and retrospection procedures. The coping devices identified in our corpus were grouped into four categories according to the type of problem they related to (resource deficit, processing time pressure, own-performance problems, and other-performance problems), and three categories according to the type of problem-management (direct, indirect, and interactional devices). It was argued that these subcategories represent problem-solving verbal behaviors of different sorts, often discussed separately in the L2 literature.

As discussed previously, the retrospection phase proved invaluable in identifying strategies that would have been otherwise overlooked (e.g., message abandonment). In addition, the procedure allowed us to independently confirm the use of a particular strategy, or reject a false identification in other cases. Hence, the use of retrospection improves both the validity of strategy categorization (i.e., that a particular coping device such as *lengthened sound* was used strategically to gain time to think), and its reliability, by providing information beyond that contained in performance of the speech elicitation tasks. For these reasons, we recommend that the use of retrospection be an integral part of communication strategy research.

**General Bibliography**


Notes

1. Although for the purposes of this paper, the term "coping device" corresponds closely with "communication strategy," an additional goal of our research, which we won't pursue here, was to explore the criteria, i.e., problem orientedness and consciousness, for determining which coping devices can be considered actual communication strategies. In a forthcoming paper we discuss these issues in detail and subsequently exclude a limited number of coping devices from our final list of strategies.

2. A shortcoming of the project was that the participants' oral behavior was recorded only on audio tape and not on video. With only one video camera available, we simply could not organize the 44 interviews to take place within the two weeks assigned to this stage of the project in the curriculum of the course the students attended.

3. These CDs will be discussed in greater detail in our forthcoming paper.
Table 1. Reliability of coping device identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Device</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) All the coping devices except for umming and erring; lengthened sound, and self-repetitions</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) As in (a) but leaving out L1-based devices as well</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* after the first 20 cases</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* in the last 10 cases</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* in the last 5 cases</td>
<td>65%</td>
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</table>

Table 2. List of the CD types identified in our corpus with descriptions/definitions, examples and/or retrospective comments.

| COPING DEVICE | DESCRIPTION | EXAMPLE AND/OR RETROSPECTIVE COMMENT
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIRECT COPING DEVICES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message abandonment</td>
<td>Leaving a message unfinished because of some language difficulty.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message reduction</td>
<td>Reducing the message by avoiding certain language structures or topics considered problematic language-wise or by leaving out some intended elements for a lack of linguistic resources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message replacement</td>
<td>Substituting the original message with a new one because of not feeling capable of executing it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumlocution</td>
<td>Exemplifying, illustrating or describing the properties of the target object or action. Several illustrative approaches may be combined.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximation</td>
<td>Using a single alternative lexical item, such as a superordinate or a related term, which shares semantic features with the target word or structure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximation: preposition</td>
<td>A subclass of approximation when a preposition is substituted by an alternative one. The reason for treating this CD separately from approximation is that it shows different features, the most obvious of which is that it usually results in ungrammatical utterances, whereas the approximation of content words typically results in grammatical solutions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of all-purpose words</td>
<td>Extending a general, &quot;empty&quot; lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R: I: Why didn't you finish this? S: Because I couldn't have finished it grammatically.
E.g.: It is a person er... who is responsible for a house, for the block of house... I don't know... [laughter]
R1: I was using very simple language.
R2: In fact I was looking for "satisfied with a good job, pleasantly tired," and so on, but instead I accepted less.

R1: I: Did you want to say this? S: No, but this was the only thing I knew.
R2: I: Here [i.e., on the instruction sheet], it didn't say "in the middle" but that "the screw thread was broken". S: Well, yes, but I didn't know "screw thread" and well, I had to say something.
R1: Well, here for instance, if I had known how to say "melt", then I would have said that. But I didn't know this and that's why I said "it becomes water".
R2: I: There was smiling, laughing, and a long break here, and then you said "a bad bird." I wonder why? S: Yes, because an awful lot of Hungarian words came to mind: mischievous, cunning, wily—everything that I wanted to say about this bird and I didn't find these words in English and that's why I thought if I laughed while saying "bad" it would mean that this bird is not really bad; it even has a little bit of goodness, or it is just mischievous.
R: Here I was really looking for "bowl" and substituted "plate" for it.
E.g.: and this mouse put a bowl to the table.

The overuse of thing, stuff, make, do, as well as words like thingie, what-do-you-call-it, etc.). E.g.: I can't can't work until you repair my... thing.
Table 1 continued (p. 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word-coinage</th>
<th>Creating a nonexistent L2 word by applying a supposed L2 rule to an existing L2 word.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restructuring</td>
<td>Abandoning the execution of a verbal plan because of language difficulties, leaving the utterance unfinished and communicating the intended message according to an alternative plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal translation from L1</td>
<td>Translating literally a lexical item, an idiom, a compound word or structure from L1 to L2. In some cases a literal translation can result in a good English structure like in the case of ‘snowman’ for some subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal translation of prepositions</td>
<td>Similarly to ‘approximation’ prepositions’ the transfer of prepositions was considered to be a subclass of literal translation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal translation: false friends</td>
<td>Expressing the meaning of a L1 word by using a L2 word very similar in form but, in fact, meaning something else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal translation from L3</td>
<td>The source of the interlingual transfer is a L3 which the speaker is currently learning or is competent in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**L1-based foreignizing**

Using a L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonology (i.e., with a L2 pronunciation) and/or morphology.

**L3-based foreignizing**

- Code switching to L1: Including L1 words with L1 pronunciation in L2 speech. This may involve stretches of discourse ranging from single words to whole chunks and even complete turns.
- Code switching to L3: The source of the interlingual borrowing is a L3.

**Use of similar-sounding words**

Compensating for a lexical item whose form the speaker is unsure of with a word (either existing or nonexisting) which sounds more or less like the target item.

**Mumbling**

Swallowing or muttering inaudibly a word (or part of a word) whose correct form the speaker is uncertain about.

**Omission**

Leaving a gap when not knowing a word and carrying on as if it had been said.

**Retrieval**

In an attempt to retrieve a lexical item saying a series of incomplete or wrong forms or structures before reaching the optimal form.

**Self-rephrasing**

One type of repetition appears to be somewhere between self-repetition and self-repair: The speaker repeats the term, but not quite as it is, by adding something or using paraphrase, in spite of the first version being already appropriate and therefore not necessitating a repair.

**Question rephrasing**

Reformulating a question within the same turn.
### Table 1 continued (p.3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categorization</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-repair</strong></td>
<td>Making self-initiated corrections in one's own speech typically after the wrong form has been uttered; however, advanced L2 speakers can occasionally monitor their intended output at the planning stage and can make corrections before actually uttering the incorrect form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other-repair</strong></td>
<td>Correcting something in the interlocutor's speech. For politeness' sake, other-repairs are often phrased as confirmation requests in which the trigger is changed, using <em>oh, you mean...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mime</strong></td>
<td>Describing whole concepts nonverbally or accompanying a verbal CD with a visual illustration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of fillers</strong></td>
<td>Using gambits to fill pauses, to stall, and to gain time in order to keep the communication channel open and maintain discourse at times of difficulty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inappropriate transfer of fillers</strong></td>
<td>The use of certain fillers was the result of transfer from the L1 and was inappropriate in the L2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inappropriately fossilized fillers</strong></td>
<td>The use of inappropriate fillers not as a result of L1 interference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code switching: L1 structure words</strong></td>
<td>Using highly automatized L1 structure words in L2 unconsciously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-repetition</strong></td>
<td>Repeating a word or a string of words immediately after they were said.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other-repetition</strong></td>
<td>Repeating something the interlocutor said to gain time. It can also occur with a question intonation when it is clear that the speaker is not expecting an answer; that is, the repetition is not a clarification question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lengthened sound</strong></td>
<td>Lengthening a sound in hesitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Umning and erring</strong></td>
<td>Making an attempt to carry on the conversation in spite of not understanding something by feigning understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E.g.: *then the sun shines and the weather get be... gets better.*

R/1 (after this example): *I corrected the grammar mistake, I didn't use the 's' in third person singular.*

R/2: *Suddenly I became uncertain because at first “smell” came to mind but then I realized that it wasn’t okay. I don’t know why this one came to mind. Then I succeeded in correcting it even before saying it.*

E.g.: *S: *... because our lip went wrong.* I: *Tip? S: Tip!* I: *Oh, tip.* S: *Tip. Okay... er... so in the kitchen from er... where the water is fluent.* I: *Oh, you mean the tap.* S: *Tap, tap...*

Because we did not have a video recording of the subjects’ speech, we could not identify examples of mime; the only examples occurred in R: *I was mining here, to put it out in front of the house, because I couldn’t remember the word.*

Examples of fillers in our corpus range from very short structures (*well, you know, actually, okay*) to longer phrases (*a minute please,), wait a minute, how can I say that [with an intonation which suggests that this is not an appeal for help, how to say*], some of which are rather complex (*this is rather difficult to explain; well, actually, it’s a good question*).

E.g.: *so...*

Especially *'or',* which students used for repairs, appeared to be extended to a filling function as in *...when you have er... too much er... things that you or they you wouldn’t er... keep er... the city or the government of the city... or the city organizes programs or... well, in this program...,* where the first and perhaps the last *'or'* can be seen as the result of a fossilized speech style.

Three such words were found: *not [irritation marker], nyug [or], nem [no],* all used with self-repair.

R/1: I: *If you...? S: I probably wanted to gain some time because I couldn't continue immediately.*

R/2: *I wanted to say that it was made of concrete but I didn’t know ‘concrete’ and this is how ‘which was made, which was made’ came out Mice.*

E.g.: I: *How does the pipe look like? S: Oh the pipe, the pipe is very nice... Or: I; And could you tell me the diameter of the pipe? The diameter. S: The diameter? It’s about er... maybe er... five centimeters.*

R: *I already had problems when I started to say ‘when I’m not in the room’: when I said “I’m” I lengthened the ‘m’ to gain time to think. This is the same as if I said ‘ah’. And the same participant later: I: When you said “look,” you stressed the “k” at the end. S: Unfortunately, I didn’t have an “m” here and couldn’t lengthen it, that was how I gained time. I: And what were you thinking about? S: What to put after it. An extreme version of this CD is when the speaker slows down a whole word: R: I was thinking what I would say after finishing the sentence. For example, here I tried consciously to say “snowman” slowly because I was already thinking about how to say “it takes place in winter time”.*

R: I: *Why were you ‘erring’ here? S: I didn’t know what to say... I was thinking about how to phrase it.*

E.g.: I: *Do you have the rubber washer? S: The rubber washer? No I don’t.*

R (after this example): *I didn’t know the meaning of the word, and finally I managed to say I had no such thing.*
Verbal strategy markers

Using verbal marking phrases before or after a CD to signal that the word or structure does not carry the intended meaning perfectly in the L2 code.

Nonverbal strategy markers

A nonverbal signal having a similar function to verbal markers.

Self-confirmation

Self-confirmation occurs after a repair or retrieval sequence, and serves as a signal that the final form the person used does carry the intended meaning adequately.

INTERACTIONAL COPING DEVICES

Direct appeal for help

Turning to the interlocutor for assistance by asking an explicit question concerning a gap in one's L2 knowledge. When the speaker shares the L1 with the interlocutor (e.g., in monolingual language classes), the appeal may be in the L1.

Indirect appeal for help

Trying to elicit help indirectly by expressing lack of a needed L2 item either verbally or nonverbally. Similarly to direct appeals, this may sometimes happen in the L1.

Asking for repetition

Requesting repetition when not hearing or understanding something properly.

Asking for clarification

Requesting an explanation of an unfamiliar meaning structure.

Asking for confirmation

Requesting confirmation that one heard or understood something correctly.

Guessing

Guessing is similar to a confirmation request but the latter implies a greater degree of certainty regarding the key word, whereas guessing involves real indecision.

Expressing non-understanding

Expressing that one did not understand something properly either verbally or nonverbally.

Interpretive summary

Extended paraphrase of the interlocutor's message to check that the speaker has understood correctly.

Asking persistence questions

Asking questions to check that the interlocutor can follow you.

Own-accuracy check

Checking that what you said was correct by asking a concrete question or repeating a word with a question intonation. Confirmation is typically signalled nonverbally by the interlocutor (e.g., with a nod), without generating a verbal exchange.

Response: repeal

Repeating the original trigger or the suggested corrected form (after an other-repair).
Response: repair
Providing other-initiated self-repair.
E.g.: S: The water was not able to get up and... I: Gel up? Where? S: Get down.

Response: rephrase
Rephrasing the trigger.
E.g.: I: And do you happen to know if you have the rubber washer? S: Pardon? I: The rubber washer... it's the thing which is in the pipe.

Response: expand
Putting the problem into a larger context.
E.g.: I: Do you know maybe what the diameter of the pipe is? S: Pardon? I: Diameter, this is er maybe you learnt mathematics and you sign with this part of things.

Response: confirm
Confirming what the interlocutor has said or suggested.
E.g.: I: Uh, you mean under the sink, the pipe? For the... S: Yes. Yes.

Response: reject
Rejecting what the interlocutor has said or suggested without offering an alternative solution.
E.g.: I: Is it plastic? S: No.

I = Interviewer; S = Subject; R = Retrospection

* Retrospection examples have been translated from Hungarian. Words enclosed in single quotes in the examples were originally spoken in Hungarian, while those in double quotes were spoken in English during the retrospection.
Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the coping devices and the retrospective comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COPING DEVICES</th>
<th>Raw freq.</th>
<th>Freq/100 wd</th>
<th>Retrospection</th>
<th>COPING DEVICES</th>
<th>Raw freq.</th>
<th>Freq/100 wd</th>
<th>Retrospection</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>message abandonment</td>
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<td>use of all-purpose words</td>
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<tr>
<td>literal transl. &quot;false friends&quot;</td>
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<td>other repair</td>
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<tr>
<td>INDIRECT COPING DEVICES</td>
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<td>use of fillers</td>
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<td>inappropriate transfer of fillers</td>
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<td>inappropriately fossil. fillers</td>
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<td>.10</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a The numbers in parantheses indicate the frequency of a CD used by the interviewer.
Table 4. Problem types associated with coping devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEM TYPE</th>
<th>COPING DEVICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Resource deficits</td>
<td>all direct coping devices (see Table X) except for rephrasings, repairs, and feigning understanding; plus appeals for help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Processing time pressure</td>
<td>fillers, repetitions, lengthened sound, and umming and erring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Own performance problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) realization that one said something incorrect</td>
<td>self-repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) realization that what one said was less than perfect</td>
<td>self-rephrasing, verbal and nonverbal markers, self-confirmation, and code switching: LI structure words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) uncertainty about whether what one said was correct or conveyed the intended message</td>
<td>question rephrasing, check questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Other performance problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) not understanding something the interlocutor said</td>
<td>feigning understanding; asking for repetition, clarification, or confirmation; expressing non-understanding; guessing; interpretive summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) lack of an expected message/response from the interlocutor</td>
<td>persistence questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) realization that what the interlocutor said was incorrect</td>
<td>other-repair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>