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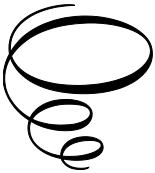

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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKING AND LEARNING

> Communication strategies are an undeniable event of language use, their existence is a reliably documented aspect of communication, and their role in second language communication seems particularly salient. (Bialystok, 1990, p. 116)

An introduction to communication strategies

Communication strategies (CSs) have become something of a hot topic within the world of language learning over recent years, with more teachers introducing them to their classes and more textbooks including CS-related activities. CSs are routinely used by native speakers in their first language (Yule & Tarone, 1997), but how can language learners benefit from explicitly being taught how to use them as well in their target language? Furthermore, how does a learner's use of CSs develop over an extended period of time? According to Nakatani and Goh (2007), there "is little agreement about what CSs really are, their transferability from L1 to L2, and whether they can be learnt in the classroom" (p. 207). Essentially, even though CSs have been continually researched and studied from the mid 1970s onward, there still remains a lack of agreeance concerning multiple key concepts related to them and their usage. Even after all these

years, the need for further research into CSs and how they are learned and used by language learners remains.

In this book, I hope to not only help shed light on some of the issues mentioned above, but importantly, I want to highlight to readers the ways in which learning to use CSs can also help develop a learner's interactional competence. I will outline a study of Japanese learners of English in which I micro-analyzed video-recorded interactions through a conversation analysis (CA) lens. During these interactions the learners actively used CSs to manage their communication in the language and develop their interactional competence in class with their peers. Young (2008) includes the use of interactional resources as a key component to the development of a learner's interactional competence. While Young (2008) does not directly discuss "CSs" or their role, I propose in this book, however, that they should also be considered as interactional resources that learners can use to manage their communication in a target language. CSs can contribute to successful communication in any language and are worth spending time on in the language classroom. The data presented and discussed in this book will highlight the various ways in which CSs can play the role of interactional resources during discursive practices with others (e.g., by aiding turn-taking, helping to repair or respond to interactional trouble, and allowing speakers to set communicative boundaries). Furthermore, although CSs are learned and used by both foreign language (FL) learners as well as second language (L2) learners, for practical purposes, I will use the term L2 henceforth in the book to refer to any language other than one's native language.

CSs can be viewed as verbal tools or resources that can be used to either prevent communicative breakdowns (*asking for clarification/ meaning/repetition*) or to simply maintain communication and/or the flow of interaction during conversational turn-taking (*interjecting, asking follow-up questions, agreeing/disagreeing,* etc.). CSs can be used either to supplement or enhance communication in the L2 depending on how and when they are used by learners during interactions. With CSs, there is no age limit or recommended guidelines for when they should be taught to language learners, therefore the ideas and practices I discuss in the book can be adapted for learners of virtually any age group. The data featured and discussed regarding the current study, however, were collected from Japanese university students studying English as a foreign language at a private university in central Japan. The data provide a basis as to why teaching L2 learners to use CSs is an important and worthwhile venture for both teachers and students alike.

In the following chapters, readers will gain not only a better understanding of CSs and their impact on language learning, but they will also discover new approaches to in-class strategy training. This book will approach the topic from both a theoretical standpoint as well as a practical one, hopefully allowing readers to gain a better understanding of how CSs and interactional competence are connected and made viewable with the help of CA.

Defining communication strategies

It is increasingly unclear what is meant by the term *communication strategy*, as it has appeared in the second-language acquisition literature,

> particularly when it begins to be used interchangeably with terms like *learning strategy, production strategy, and perception strategy*. Do all these terms refer to the same phenomenon? If not, what do they refer to? (Tarone, 1983, p. 61, italics original)

In a very basic sense, CSs can be viewed as (or refer to) the verbal tools that a language user uses in order to achieve a particular communicative goal. They can be employed to overcome communicative problems, but they can also be used simply to maintain a natural flow of communication, to express interest, or to encourage an interlocutor to continue speaking. CSs are used both in a speaker's L1 and L2 and are used at times consciously and other times unconsciously. Kasper and Kellerman (1997) write that there "is a possibility a speaker or hearer may not always be aware of using a CS but can become conscious of it after the fact, or that repeatedly used CS[s] may become routinized" (p. 7). By having students reflect on how they use CSs in journals or by having them identify CSs while transcribing their video-recorded conversations, it can help raise students' overall consciousness and awareness of how and when they use them during conversations to successfully communicate with one another. As Corder (1983) states, "Strategies of communication have essentially to do with the relationship between ends and means" (p. 17). Based on this belief, within the context of L2 learning and CSs, we can view successful communication as the end goal, with CSs serving as the means to get there.

Earlier studies of CSs conducted during the 1970s were concerned more with how to define, identify, and classify the various CSs L2 learners used (Kasper & Kellerman, 1997). Definitions changed and evolved from the 1970s into the early 1980s with words like "conscious"

becoming "potentially conscious" (Tarone, 1983) as researchers continued trying to understand the process of how and when L2 learners employ CSs during communication. As Faerch and Kasper (1983) noted, "There are various problems in defining communication strategies as consciously employed plans. First of all, consciousness is perhaps more a matter of degree than either-or" (p. 35).

Although decades have passed since those early studies, finding a definition of CSs that researchers in the field can unanimously agree upon remains an unsolved task. The term "strategy" carries various implications and interpretations among researchers and educators. McDonough (1999) writes that "The concept of strategy has however proved difficult to define in agreed fashion" (p. 1). Below are some examples of the more influential and often cited definitions of CSs provided throughout the years:

> Conscious communication strategies are used by an individual to overcome the crisis which occurs when language structures are inadequate to convey the individual's thought. (Tarone, 1977, p. 195)

> [CSs are] a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his (or her) meaning when faced with some difficulty. (Corder, 1981, p. 103)

> [CSs are] potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal. (Faerch & Kasper, 1983, p.36)

> CSs are regarded not only as problem-solving phenomena to compensate for communication disruptions, but also as devices with pragmatic discourse functions for message enhancement. (Nakatani & Goh, 2007, p. 208)

Based on the above definitions, we can say that CSs are potentially conscious verbal actions that learners employ when they either face a communicative problem or when they simply want to encourage their speaking partner to continue talking. CSs have the potential to prevent communicative breakdowns and help weaker learners improve how they manage communication as they learn to better take turns, ask more questions, and/or ask for meaning when something said is not understood. Various studies over the years have shown that explicit strategy training can in fact help learners to understand CSs better and help strengthen their speaking ability in English (Dörnyei, 1995; Nakatani, 2005, 2006, 2010; Sato, 2005). Furthermore, CSs can also aid communication when no communicative problems are present (Nakatani & Goh, 2007).

Influential taxonomies of communication strategies

Given the uncertainty and debate about what CSs are and how they are used in communication, we will now examine a contributing factor to this issue: the diverse list of evolving taxonomies proposed by various researchers over the years. Earlier taxonomies were used to "illustrate the definitions" of different types of CSs but did not make any great attempts at systematically analyzing them (Poulisse, 1990, p. 2). Dörnyei and Scott (1997) examined the major taxonomies previously put forth by others, arguably the most influential in their field. Taxonomies featured in their review include Tarone (1977), Faerch and Kasper (1983), Bialystok (1983), Paribakht (1985), Willems (1987), Bialystok (1990), and the Nijmegen Group (i.e., Kellerman, Bongaerts, and Poulisse, 1987; Poulisse, 1990). They then conclude the review by adding their own taxonomy (Dörnyei &

Scott, 1997) that is broken down into three categories of CSs: direct, interactional, and indirect. Direct strategies would include strategies such as message reduction, circumlocution, and word-coinage. Interactional strategies include strategies such as appeals for help, comprehension checks, and asking for clarification. Indirect strategies include use of fillers, repetitions, and other verbal strategy markers.

One of the earliest groundbreaking taxonomies of CSs came from Tarone (1977) and it is "still seen as one of the most influential in the field" (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997, p. 175). Tarone's taxonomy is also one of "the most frequently cited" (Poulisse, 1990, p. 23). Tarone's taxonomy became a starting point for CS organization that focused on output and helped generate a newfound interest in the topic, influencing many other researchers in the field. After Tarone's taxonomy, other researchers began to build from it, expand it, and/or develop their own taxonomies. Tarone's taxonomy of CSs consisted of avoidance, paraphrase, conscious transfer, appeal for assistance, and mime. Avoidance included avoiding topics that were too difficult to discuss or abandoning a message. Paraphrasing included word coinage and circumlocution when a certain word was unknown to the speaker. Conscious transfer dealt with translation or switching languages when necessary. Appeal for assistance meant asking for help when needed from an interlocutor. Mime referred to using gestures to communicate when words were not enough to convey one's message.

Faerch and Kasper (1983) developed a taxonomy that categorized CSs as either reduction or achievement strategies. Reduction strategies were separated by formal (phonological, morphological, syntactic, and

lexical) and functional (topic avoidance, message abandonment, or replacement of meaning). Achievement strategies were broken down into compensatory strategies (e.g., code-switching), interlanguage-based strategies (e.g., paraphrase), cooperative strategies (e.g., signaling a communicative problem and seeking help from an interlocutor), non-linguistic strategies (e.g., using gestures), and retrieval strategies (e.g., finding ways to remember a word).

Paribakht's taxonomy (1985) was based on four different communicative approaches: linguistic, contextual, conceptual, and mime. A linguistic approach includes the use of circumlocution, a contextual approach includes the use of knowledge of idioms and proverbs, a contextual approach includes demonstration, and mime includes the use of gestures to get one's meaning across.

The Nijmegen Group (Bongaerts & Poulisse, 1989; Kellerman, Bongaerts, & Poulisse, 1987; Poulisse, 1990) developed a taxonomy based on a four-year project that examined how Dutch learners of English used compensatory strategies during four different tasks. Their taxonomy consisted of two types of compensatory strategies, conceptual and linguistic. Conceptual strategies are divided as analytic or holistic while linguistic strategies are divided as morphological creativity and transfer.

The various taxonomies and definitions discussed so far systematically categorize CSs and tell us what they are, but how and when exactly do language learners decide to use such strategies? Tarone (1981) puts forth her own criteria to characterize the employment of CSs (p. 288):

(1) a speaker desires to communicate meaning x to a listener;

(2) the speaker believes the linguistic or sociolinguistic structure desired to communicate meaning x is unavailable, or is not shared with the listener; thus

(3) the speaker chooses to

  (a) avoid – not attempt to communicate meaning x – or

  (b) attempt alternate means to communicate meaning x. The speaker stops trying alternatives when it seems clear to the speaker that there is shared meaning.

The criteria put forth by Tarone provides a general overview of when and how a speaker decides to use a CS. This view could arguably be too general, however, considering that it assumes that use of CSs is conscious and readily accessible to L2 learners. Bialystok (1990) adds to the discussion by highlighting the fact that CSs are not so easily identifiable, nor definable. She writes “It is not easy to decide how to identify when strategies have been used, what the strategies are, and why it is that they work (or don’t work)” (p. 14). Further adding to the difficulty of creating a universally accepted criteria and explanation of how CSs are used, is the question of whether a strategy is a process or a plan.

Faerch and Kasper (1983) looked at what constitutes a process as opposed to a plan and how each relates to the use of CSs. After examining several definitions of what a process is believed to be, they conclude that strategy use should not be considered as a process, but instead be identified as a subclass of plans. Faerch and Kasper then give their criteria for CS use, which is divided into two parts: Problem-orientedness and Consciousness. Problem-orientedness refers to the communicative problems learners are faced with due mainly to deficiencies in their foreign or

second language repertoire. Faerch and Kasper (1983) believe that "It follows from these considerations that problem-orientedness is a relevant defining criterion for communication strategies from both a FL learning and teaching perspective" (p. 32). Faerch and Kasper include consciousness as a secondary defining criterion, coming after problem-orientedness. Consciousness refers to the acknowledgement of a learners' ability to identify a communicative problem and then form a conscious assessment and a plan leading to a potential solution or fix. The authors believe that problem-solving plans "lend themselves" (p. 32) to consciousness-raising and should be included in language classes. In other words, the two criteria are connected and work together to help learners overcome problematic communicative situations. A learner first encounters a problem, then potentially makes a conscious choice to attempt to overcome it, perhaps by using a CS.

Metacognitive models of strategic learning

Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, and Robbins (1999) offer an instructional framework in teaching metacognitive learning strategies to L2 learners. The framework was labeled as The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA). Although Chamot et al. (1999) use the term "learning strategies," the framework can be applied to both learning to use CSs and language learning strategies (LLSs). Chamot et al. provide a list of 27 "learning strategies" along with their instructional framework. Of the 27 learning strategies given, 18 of them can be considered as CSs. Examples of possible CSs from their list include *predicting*, *asking if something makes sense*, *selective attention*, *deduction/induction*, *summarizing*,

asking for clarification, *substituting words/using synonyms*, and more. According to Chamot et al (1999) "The CALLA model provides explicit instruction in learning strategies that will assist students in meeting national curriculum standards, learning both language and content, and becoming independent learners who can evaluate their own learning" (p. 7). The instructional framework for CALLA includes five phases: Preparation, Presentation, Practice, Evaluation, and Expansion. During the preparation process learners prepare by thinking about their previous knowledge of strategies and how they have used them in the past. The preparation phase involves the teacher introducing a new strategy and explaining how and when to use it. Following this, students reach the practice phase in which they practice using the strategy during class activities. Afterwards students evaluate the strategy and determine how well it has worked for them. The CALLA model ends with expansion where students begin to use the strategy in new or different situations or learning tasks to aid their learning and understanding. A similar model as the CALLA was used for the current study, one in which students were presented with CSs, practiced them, evaluated their use, and then expanded their use of them during video-recorded conversations. Further details of this process and the study will be outlined later in the book.

Due to the various criticisms over methodology and what Macaro (2006) refers to as a "lack of theoretical rigour" (p. 321), he proposed a revised theoretical framework for the teaching of strategies, one that would differentiate strategies as skills, processes, and styles. Macaro proposes "a framework within cognitive psychology and information processing, one that includes learner strategies in a clear relationship with

other domains of language use" (p. 325). The framework was created in order to potentially "enhance current theory" (p. 320) of how strategies are taught and learned. Macaro described learner strategies as having a "series of essential features" (p. 325). Macaro's framework proposes that learner strategies occur in one's working memory only and that in other places they become different constructs. He then identifies and examines other key features necessary for his framework to "hold true" such as locations of strategies, relationships to other strategies, strategy goals, and tasks. According to Macaro, there are three "underlying propositions" to his theoretical framework. First Macaro believes that "researchers should describe strategies in terms of a goal, a situation, and a mental action" (p. 329). Secondly, he believes that they are the product of "conscious cognitive processing" and that whether or not they work depends on how they are combined and used during tasks the learner engages in. Thirdly, Macaro highlights the need to distinguish strategies from other subconscious activities, plans, learning processes, styles, etc.

Language learning strategies

Although considered a cognitive phenomenon, the thought process behind using LLSs appears to be easier to observe and understand compared to the thought process that occurs while someone is using CSs. While it is difficult to judge whether a language learner has used a CS consciously, it is perhaps less difficult to judge whether or not a learner has been using certain LLSs consciously. LLSs are at times simply more visible to the teacher (e.g., note-taking, organizing class work into separate files/folders, making flashcards, thinking out loud, counting with fingers, etc.).

Essentially, a teacher may have more visual cues to work with when LLSs are being used by their students. Oxford (2011) does, however, write that "people often learn as they communicate" (p. 13), which would imply that learners can also "learn" by using CSs during interactions with speaking partners. The fact that the term LLSs is at times used interchangeably with the term CSs (Tarone, 1983) gives reason for a closer look at their relationship. Brown (2007) differentiates the two types of strategies by stating that LLSs "relate to input – to processing, storage, and retrieval, that is, to taking in messages from others" while CSs "pertain to output, how we productively express meaning, how we deliver messages to others" (p. 132). Brown highlights the differences between LLSs and CSs but suggests that some LLSs (socioaffective strategies) can also be viewed as CSs, thereby signaling that overlap may exist between the two strategy types. What other types of LLSs can also be considered as CSs? In what ways are the two types of strategies similar? Do learners simultaneously use both at once? Let us now take a closer look at how LLSs are defined and how they relate to CSs.

Defining language learning strategies

LLSs are:

> steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. (Oxford, 1990, p. 1)
>
> procedures or techniques that learners can use to facilitate a learning task. (Chamot et al, 1999, p. 2)
>
> activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning. (Griffiths, 2013, p. 15)

Based on the definitions put forward, we can essentially view LLSs as the conscious steps learners take to improve their language abilities. LLSs can range from notetaking to watching movies in the target language. Like CSs, definitions of LLSs are not free of controversy or disagreement. Cohen (2007) surveyed 19 international "strategy experts" concerning their opinions of key issues in LLS research and about how LLSs are defined by academics. Cohen writes that "the field is still lacking consensus on a unified theory, with agreement by learner strategy experts on some concepts and definitions and not on others" (p. 30). On the survey, Cohen included a definition of LLSs and asked the 19 strategy experts to decide whether or not they agreed with it. The definition given by Cohen states that:

> Strategies can be classified as conscious mental activity. They must contain not only an action but a goal (or an intention) and a learning situation. Whereas a mental action might be subconscious, an action with a goal/intention and related to a learning situation can only be conscious. (p. 31)

Noting the lack of agreement among the experts who took the survey, Cohen concludes that "The responses to this item illustrate why there is no popularly-accepted definition" (p.31).

It has been established that one particular goal of using CSs is to strengthen a learner's communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980). However, LLSs also share this goal. Oxford (1990) writes that:

> All appropriate language learning strategies are oriented toward the broad goal of communicative competence. Development of communicative

> competence requires realistic interaction among learners using meaningful, contextualized language. Learning strategies help learners to participate actively in such authentic communication. Such strategies operate in both general and specific ways to encourage the development of communicative competence. (p. 8)

This description of LLSs and the development of communicative competence sounds quite similar to how one would also discuss or describe the functions of CSs. If you were to replace "language learning strategies" in Oxford's statement with "communication strategies," little, if any, meaning would be lost. It is easy to understand the confusion over the potential overlap between CSs and LLSs seeing how they both contribute to one's overall communicative competence. One simplistic way to look at how LLSs can also be considered as CSs is to believe that we learn in order to communicate, therefore learning is an essential part of communication. Macaro (2001) writes that "it would be difficult to deny that there is a process of learning going on simultaneously with the process of communicating" (p. 19). Do both of these strategic actions happen simultaneously or does one type of strategy evolve into the other while being used?

Griffiths (2013) suggested the possibility of identifying exact moments when CSs can become LLSs. By giving a personal example from her own language learning experience, she pinpoints the moment the transfer between the strategies took place. The setting of the story involved the author traveling in Turkey and asking a couple of locals to take a photo of her with some Turkish ruins in the background. To ask the Turkish couple for help, she used gestures (a non-verbal CS) and then handed them

the camera. The couple smiled, took the photo, said something in Turkish, and then handed the camera back to the author. By knowing a few of the words the couple had used, guessing the meaning to some of the words from how they were used in context (photograph machine = camera), as well as repeating the words to herself, writing down the words, and checking her dictionary, the author was able to understand the meaning of what was said. She had used what would seem like a combination of CSs and LLSs. She then describes using some of the words she learned from the exchange with the Turkish couple and people being impressed with her improved abilities in speaking the language. She writes that "The point at which the communication strategies changed into learning strategies really was quite clear: it was the point where I consciously chose to learn from the encounter rather than settling for merely having communicated and got what I wanted" (p. 15).

Oxford (1990) also believes that CSs can be employed for learning purposes as well as to communicate. She writes that "The argument that communication strategies cannot also be learning strategies is inaccurate. It is often impossible to determine whether the learner intends to use a given strategy to communicate or to learn" (p. 243). In this sense, only the learner can be sure of why they used the strategy, as Griffiths highlighted in her example. For the teacher, however, it is much more difficult to know if a learner is communicating to learn or learning to communicate. Students' use of strategies and their motivation may vary depending on the answer to that question.

Although most strategies are employed in hopes of achieving predetermined goals of different kinds, they are not all alike and are used

differently by their users depending on the setting or circumstances at the time of use. In terms of strategy use while learning or speaking an L2, it can seem at times difficult to identify and categorize the various strategies learners or speakers employ. Much of this difficulty derives from the broad definitions of LLSs and the fact that many of the strategies featured in taxonomies actually overlap with what others would label as CSs.

Brown (2007) explains that LLSs are separated into three main categories: (1) metacognitive, (2) cognitive, and (3) socioaffective (pp. 134-135). According to him, metacognitive strategies would include Self-Monitoring (Being aware of one's own language issues and correcting them) as well as Delayed Production (Deciding to listen for more information before responding). Cognitive strategies would include Repetition (Repeating what was said by a partner during an interaction), Translation (Using knowledge of one's first language for understanding the L2), Recombination (Combining known elements in speech in a new way to construct meaning), Keyword (Remembering new words in the L2 by associating them with L1 words or by recalling them due to other relationships), Contextualization (Using a word/phrase in a language sequence), Transfer (Using previously learned language skills in a new language learning task), and Inferencing (Guessing meaning by using available information). Socioaffective strategies include Cooperation (Working with a partner to achieve a goal of receiving feedback, information, or to model a language activity) and Questions for Clarification (Asking for repetition, Paraphrasing, etc. to aid comprehension). It is important to note that some of the examples of LLSs highlighted here could also be considered as CSs. According to Brown (2007),

socioaffective strategies and some of the other strategies he listed “are actually communication strategies” (p. 134).

In summary, LLSs and CSs maintain an important connection, although their relationship and the fact that they sometimes overlap can potentially lead to confusion at times. Many learners learn to communicate; therefore, they use LLSs to help them do so. Depending on a learner’s motivation, certain LLSs can thereby also be classified as CSs or vice versa.

CHAPTER 2

A HISTORICAL LOOK AT COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES, KEY CONCEPTS, AND ISSUES IN THE RESEARCH

The evolution of communication strategy research

Early theories and research regarding the use of CSs date back to the early-mid 1970s (Selinker, 1972; Tarone, Cohen, & Dumas, 1976; Varadi, 1973). Kasper and Kellerman (1997) write that "Early studies of communication strategies concerned themselves mostly with questions of definition, identification and classification" (p. 1) while Ellis (2008) writes that the "Early research on CSs was concerned with the mental operations that underlie the use of such strategies and focused narrowly on lexis" (p. 502). By focusing on such issues, the research ignored a key aspect of CSs; how they are used in actual communication and during interactions with others. Admitting that her own research also lacked an examination of CSs from an interactional viewpoint during those early years, Tarone (1981) writes that:

> It is unfortunate that the *interactional function* of CS[s] has been overlooked to date both in my own research and in others. It is easy to forget that language is not an object which is used but a part of

> communication–a living organism created by both speaker and hearer. (p. 288, italics original)

Although Tarone commented on the lack of research being conducted on the interactional functions of CSs back in 1981, it may still be lacking even today, more than four decades later. Currently, not many studies examine CSs from an interactional view or look deeply at the effects they potentially have on a learner's speaking performance in an L2 classroom context (Nakatani, 2010). Along with research at times neglecting CS use in interactions, some studies have also neglected to examine the relationship between CS use and overall language acquisition (Ellis, 2008). As it is believed that a language can be learned through actively using it (Boyd & Maloof, 2000; Swain, 2000; Vygotsky, 1986;) and that CSs can help L2 learners to keep their conversations going (Hatch, 1978; Nakatani, 2005) as well as help provide comprehensible input when needed (Yule & Tarone, 1991), it would seem logical to believe that CSs could positively contribute to second language acquisition (SLA) and language learning in general if used actively and consciously during interactions by learners.

Long (1983) introduced what he called the Interaction Hypothesis. He believed, like Hatch (1978), that interaction in the L2 was an essential part of a learner's overall language acquisition, a necessary component and condition to learning. Long believed that through interactions, input could be modified and made more comprehensible for learners, thus helping them to better understand the language presented and thereby aide their acquisition of it at the same time. According to Long's Interaction Hypothesis (cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 43):

(1) Interactional modification makes input comprehensible.

(2) Comprehensible input promotes acquisition.

Therefore,

(3) Interactional modification promotes acquisition.

According to Long (1983), examples of the types of conversational modifications that would promote language acquisition during modified interactions include comprehension checks ("What did you just say?"), clarification checks ("Did you just say _____?"), and self-repetition or paraphrase (A: I saw a movie yesterday. B: A movie / You watched a movie.). These conversational modifications provided by Long all have one thing in common, they can all be considered as CSs. In essence, CSs can be used to help make input comprehensible for learners, which promotes language acquisition. Although some researchers put an emphasis on interaction and its impact on language acquisition (Gass, 1997; Hall, 1999; and Hatch, 1978), not all do. There remains today a debate about where acquisition takes place, between learners (social) or within individual learners (cognitive).

In discussing what they called a "Cognitive bias" within the SLA research community, Firth and Wagner (1997) believe that examining L2 learning from a sociocultural perspective as well, one in which language is learned through use and interactions with others, could benefit the field of SLA and add more understanding to how a language is learned. To make their case, Firth and Wagner specifically refer to the treatment of CSs within L2 research and how over the years they have been studied primarily from a cognitive perspective instead of what the authors see as

the more appropriate way to view them, from a sociocultural perspective. They write that "Within CS research, we see social processes being interpreted from the perspective of cognition" (Firth & Wagner, 1997, p. 289). Not everyone agreed with the views presented in Firth and Wagner's paper, however, and the ideas it proposed drew criticism from others within the SLA field (Kasper, 1997; Long, 1997). Although Kasper (1997) writes that Firth and Wagner's paper "raises important issues," she then goes on to write that "The paper purports to redirect the field of SLA, but has in fact very little to say about L2 *acquisition*" (p. 310, italics original). Firth and Wagner, although criticized by some, received praise and support from others who share their concern regarding a potential "cognitive bias" within the L2 research field. Rampton (1997) for example, takes a similar view as Firth and Wagner (1997), writing in support that "My views on L2 research are broadly in line with Firth & Wagner's, and so I would like to try to take up where they left off" (p. 329). It is hopeful that the current study as well, will take up where Firth and Wagner left off and add to the continuing discussion of social interaction and its impact and influence on L2 learning. Regarding historical significance, however, it is important to first look at where interest in CSs really began to flourish, within the framework of communicative competence.

Communicative competence

> Collecting definitions of *communicative competence* can be fun. Teachers, methodologists, and textbook writers have used the term in many interesting and confusing ways. Some use it assuredly, some

> tendentiously, others cautiously. And there are still some who have trouble pronouncing it. (Savignon, 1997, p. 7, italics original)

The concept of a learner's communicative competence began in the early 1970s with Hymes' influential and often referenced paper entitled, *On communicative competence* (Hymes, 1972). Hymes' paper was written partly as a response to earlier work done by Chomsky (1965) in which he made a distinction between what he saw as a learner's competence and a learner's performance. According to Chomsky, a learner's competence is made up of what he or she knows about the language (grammar rules, language structure, etc.) while performance represents what the learner can actually do in the language. In response to the claims made by Chomsky (1965), Hymes argued that grammatical competence was not enough to explain a learner's true competence. Instead, Hymes called for the examination into what he saw as a learner's "communicative competence." Hymes (1972) writes that a learner's general competence is "dependent upon both (tacit) *knowledge* and (ability for) *use*" (p. 282, italics original). The theory and concept put forth by Hymes led to new theories and research in the field of communicative language learning, most famously with Canale and Swain (1980). Building on the foundation laid by Hymes, they put forth their own theory of communicative competence, based on three interconnected components: (1) grammatical competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, and (3) strategic competence. Later, Canale (1983) added (4) discourse competence to the existing three.

With the publication of Canale and Swain's (1980) paper, came a renewed interest and push for more research in the area of CS use and its relationship to overall communicative competence. The theoretical

framework for communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and later revised by Canale (1983) became not only influential in CS research, but also in communicative language teaching (CLT) research. Canale and Swain (1980) write that "The examination of the theoretical bases has led us to question some of the existing principles, and in turn to develop a somewhat modified set of principles which is consistent with a more comprehensive theoretical framework for the consideration of communicative competence" (p. 1). Although communicative competence greatly aids and supports a speaker's performance and communicative ability, Canale and Swain (1980), like Chomsky (1965), felt the need to distinguish between competence and performance in their work, writing that "competence refers to knowledge of grammar and of other aspects of language while performance refers to actual use" (p. 3). Canale and Swain further clarify the distinction between competence and performance by stating that "one cannot directly measure competence: only performance is observable" (p. 6). As a cognitive function and something that is happening inside a learner's mind, it is understandably difficult to measure competence without observing performance.

Here we will look at a summarized breakdown of the competencies that make up a learner's communicative competence, according to Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), along with a brief description of their functional use.

1. **Grammatical competence**- A speaker's knowledge regarding sentence structure and grammar of a language.