

more they increase learner motivation by making him feel in control of his own learning and being able to see practical aspects of what he learns. Simulations can be a powerful tool for supporting learner autonomy in the classroom.

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CURRENT PROBLEMS OF THE CONCEPT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNER STRATEGIES

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Learning strategies present a crucial concept of educational psychology, institutional science, neuroscience, informatics and others. Since the 1960s, language learning strategies have also been gaining an important place in the theory of first and second (or foreign) language acquisition set in the scientific discipline of linguodidactics and psycholinguistics. Nowadays, foreign language learning strategy is a concept that captures a wide range of linguistic behaviours in the foreign language learning. The problems of this wide strategy conceptualisation are discussed in the paper. The differences and similarities among language learner strategies, language learning strategies, test taking strategies, communication strategies and within associated speaking strategies are described. The main conclusion of this paper is that in order to differentiate between individual strategies, the declared or perceived intention of the learner is one of the most essential indicators to be taken into account.

Keywords: communication strategies, foreign language acquisition, foreign language learning, language use strategies, learner strategies, learning strategies, test taking strategies.

1 Introduction

In respect of psychology, a learning strategy was first introduced to psychology of thinking and defined as "a pattern of making decisions in the acquisition, retention, and utilization of information", which is used for specific objectives (Bruner, Goodnow & Austin 1956, p. 54). Regarding learning strategies, they are an essential concept in educational psychology, cognitive psychology and other disciplines. However, language learning strategies have become a concept associated with linguodidactics, psy-

cholinguistics and first, second (or foreign) language acquisition and they are gaining their significance in terms of their contribution to communicative competence (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Some authors differentiate between language learning strategies and language use strategies (e.g. Cohen & Weaver 2006, Bimmel & Rampillon 2000, Ellis 1994), which is a problem in both psychological and didactical points of view. First of all, the differentiation is not disjunctive and it does not have clear borders because during language use, language learning can naturally co-occur. Secondly, it is sometimes ambiguous or not obvious for a learner as well as for an external observer what the primary aim is, whether it is to use the language or to learn through the language use (Vlčková 2010). COHEN and WEAVER (2006) define language use strategies as conscious processes chosen by learners to use what they have learnt. They define communication strategies as a subcategory of language use strategies. To avoid misunderstanding, some authors prefer the learner strategy notion to include not only learning strategies but also language use strategies (e.g. Cohen 1998, Cohen & Macaro 2007, Grenfell & Harris 1999).

The above mentioned terms induce confusion in their use especially when they are interchangeably referred to each other. Furthermore, one of the most challenging problems concerns the identification of these strategies because not only they are difficult to differentiate but there are also the so-called test taking strategies, which have to be taken into account as they are a part of each research focused on any kind of learner strategies. The paper discusses whether the terms could really denote the same phenomenon or on the other hand, what the main differences in these notions are. Special attention is also paid to strategies associated with oral communication, i.e. communication strategies and speaking strategies to illustrate an example of problems with differentiating the learner strategy concepts on one of the four language skills.

2 Concepts of Learner Strategies

As already mentioned the concept of learner strategies consists of more sub-concepts which show strategies from different point of views. The paper discusses the concept of language learning strategies, language use strategies, test taking strategies and (as an example of the four language skills) the emphasis is placed on speaking strategies and communication strategies, their similarities and differences.

2.1 Language Learning Strategies

First of all, the relationship of language learning strategies and language use strategies is found to be problematic as the terms happen to be confusingly interchangeably used to refer to either concept. RUBIN (1975, p. 43) defines learning strategies as "the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge." Therefore, the main difference between use and learning strategies seems to be the motivation to communicate or alternatively, motivation to acquire the language. However, the main confusion is caused by ambiguous determination of learner's conscious or unconscious aim, because this is one of the features not being easily identified. Moreover, learner's intention can be both to communicate and to learn and in addition, a learner can acquire the language through his own communication (Tarone 1981). As a result, these concepts are very difficult to be differentiated but the main differences are the basic intention and aim, which is sometimes troublesome to specify.

2.2 Language Use Strategies

CANALIE and SWAIN (1980) refer to the ability of learners to use language strategies as their strategic competence, which can be understood as a component of communicative language use. COHEN and WEAVER (2006) specify four groups falling within the category of language use strategies, which are retrieval, rehearsal, communication and cover strategies.

Retrieval strategies refer to recalling language information through visualisation, mnemonics, mind-maps, etc. Rehearsal strategies concern e.g. pronunciation exercises of the words or phrases that are intended to be used. Cover strategies are consciously implied by the learner to disguise learner's insufficiencies to make an impression of managing the language. They include strategies such as message simplifying or pretending of understanding. Communication strategies are dealt with in more details in the next subchapter. Although communication strategies and production strategies are strategies of language use, as they both express learners' attempts to use their linguistic system (Cohen & Weaver 2006). The essential difference between these two notions is that production strategies do not include the interactional focus on the negotiation of meaning. Production strategies are applied in order to use one's linguistic system efficiently without excessive efforts (Tarone 1981).

2.3 Communication Strategies

The communication strategies can be specified according to TARONE'S (1978) categorization, who differentiated categories of paraphrase, borrowing, appeal for assistance, mime, and avoidance.

When learners are not sure with using a particular word or phrase, they can choose to paraphrase it using an approximation word, which means that they use language item or structure containing similar semantic features instead of the appropriate term, using a word coinage, where the learners create an original word based on their language experience, or using circumlocution, when the intention is described by means of some characteristics or features depicting the desired object.

Another way to maintain the communication flowing, the learners sometimes intend to use borrowings, either they choose the literal translation, e.g. keeping the original sentence structure of their mother tongue and implying it to the target language, or they completely switch into their mother tongue without any translation.

Other methods to continue in communication are asking some authorities for help with the appropriate word – appeal for assistance, or using nonverbal language instead of lexical items – mime.

Learners can also choose to avoid either the topic, when they refrain from talking about concepts unknown to them, or the message, when they interrupt talking about a topic, which is demanding for them.

Altogether, according to CANALE and SWAIN (1980), communication strategies can be understood as actions chosen by speakers to compensate for communication breakdown or to prevent misunderstanding either due to lack of sufficient knowledge or current limits in the communication, e.g. when speakers are momentarily unable to recall a linguistic item, a grammatical form or ideas, or they are chosen in order to improve the effectiveness of communication (Canale & Swain 1980). Because of the aim of using these strategies is to compensate for a lack of knowledge of a linguistic system, these strategies are referred to as compensation strategies by some authors (e.g. Oxford 1990, Cohen & Weaver 1996). The occurrence of communication strategies is only realized when there is meaning to be conveyed, which means that the purpose for use of communication strategies is meaningful communication (Rossiter 2005).

Basically, communication strategies are a part of language use rather than a part of speaker's linguistic knowledge. The reason for their use is to compensate for the lack in the linguistic system and furthermore, they are focused on exploring alternate ways of expressing the intention of the speaker. TARONE (1980, p. 288) concludes the primary function of communication strategies as "to negotiate an agreement on meaning between two interlocutors." In addition, they can be seen as a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning when the desired meaning is probably not shared. Therefore, they can be denoted as a bridge between interlocutor's intention and missing linguistic knowledge (Tarone 1981).

2.4 Speaking Strategies

Speaking strategies are supposed to be an essential type of language learning strategies as well as language use strategies. Repeatedly, speaking strategies are confusingly understood as a synonym of communication strategies. In fact, they overlap to a certain extent. OXFORD (1990) defines six categories of learning strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, memory, social and affective strategies) and mentions that all of them contribute to learner's speaking skill development. THIRUMALAI (2005) states, that speaking strategies directly fall within the category of communication strategies. However, speaking is not always realized for the purpose of communication. Consequently, speaking strategies can concern only one participant of the communication, for instance, when the interlocutor plans or rehearses his speech. As a result, speaking strategies and communication strategies can be differentiated according to the intention of speaking.

2.5 Test Taking Strategies

Test taking strategies are constituted within language use strategies, but they can overlap with learning strategies as the learners may happen to learn while solving the test. In fact, they are test-taking processes selected by the respondents, which are conscious to a certain degree. Basically, it cannot be assumed that any test taking strategy is a good or poorer choice for a given task. Other influences must be taken into account, such as cognitive style, language knowledge and repertoire of test taking strategies of the individual, and as a whole they contribute to the actual employment of the strategies at a certain moment and task. It is true that whereas some learners are familiar with a wide range of test taking strategies, they do not necessarily employ them during a task solution or they do not use them appropriately, some learners have a lesser repertoire of strategies but they are capable of employing them in accordance with a given task to achieve success. Moreover, every learner may prefer an-

other strategy so according to some authors (e. g. Bachman & Cohen 1998, p. 93) there cannot be even any successful test taking strategies recommended.

When the intention of a task-based evaluation or research instrument is to measure learning strategies, in fact, they do also measure test taking strategies (eventually language use strategies – e.g. a speaking task – employment of communication strategies), which must be taken into account already at the measurement design. COHEN (1998, p. 96-103) argues that for example multiple choice tests are generally the most problematic regarding the separation of test taking strategies and the strategies originally planned to be measured as they are not rarely ambiguous and confusing for the test takers. On the other hand, he emphasizes that verbal reports of respondents might be a useful tool for the differentiation.

For what respondents do at their test taking, such as lexical avoidance, simplification or approximation, test taking strategies are referred to as compensatory strategies by some authors (see Bachman and Palmer, 1996).

3 Conclusion

As a result, it is obvious that the concepts of different types of foreign language learner strategies are mutually influential and at the same time, they consist of distinctive features which enable us to differentiate between them, although this differentiation is often a cause for misunderstanding or confusion. COHEN (2006) recommends the use of the concept of learner strategies as a collective term for learning strategies, language use strategies as well as test taking strategies, which has been preferred since 2003.

The main difference between learning strategies and language use strategies consists in the intention of the learner, whether his aim is to learn the language or to use the language. In reality, this distinction is quite ambiguous as it may happen that the motivation of the learner is both to

learn the language and to use it at the same time. Furthermore, learners frequently acquire the language through the language use.

Concerning the difference between communication strategies and speaking strategies, they overlap to a certain extent. However, whereas communication strategies primarily belong to the concept of language use strategies, speaking strategies are not only connected to learning strategies but also language use strategies.

The aim of this paper was to focus on finding similarities and differences in concepts of learner strategies, learning strategies, language use strategies, test taking strategies and their selected subgroups. A concrete example was illustrated at the differentiation between communication and speaking strategies. Should the precise differentiation be realized, researchers must be aware of the intention or of the learner to differentiate between language use and learning strategies and to respect casual overlaps at the same time. To refer to the common group of strategies, the concept of learner strategies is preferred. Special attention must be paid to test taking strategies as they almost always co-occur at testing of different strategies, which must be regarded in task design.

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