

## Non-English Major College Students' English Communicative Competence and Communicative Strategic Development

### DES COMPETENCES DE COMMUNICATION EN ANGLAIS ET DE STRATEGIE DE DEVELOPPEMENT POUR LES ETUDIANTS D'UNIVERSITE. DE SPECIALITE NON-ANGLOPHONE

ZHANG Yuanyuan<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College English Department, Qufu Normal University, Qufu 273165, China

\*Corresponding author.

Address: College English Department, Qufu Normal University, Qufu 273165, China

Email: zyywyq@163.com

Received 8 April 2011; accepted 10 July 2011

#### Abstract

Many university students in China remain less competent in addressing all kinds of communication breakdowns. This paper helps to provide Chinese teachers with approaches to the development of students' communication strategies in classroom teaching.

**Key words:** Communicative competence; Communicative strategies; Teaching model

#### Résumé

De nombreux étudiants en Chine restent moins compétents dans la lutte contre toutes sortes de pannes de communication. Ce document contribue à fournir aux enseignants chinois avec des approches à l'élaboration de stratégies de communication des élèves dans l'enseignement en classe.

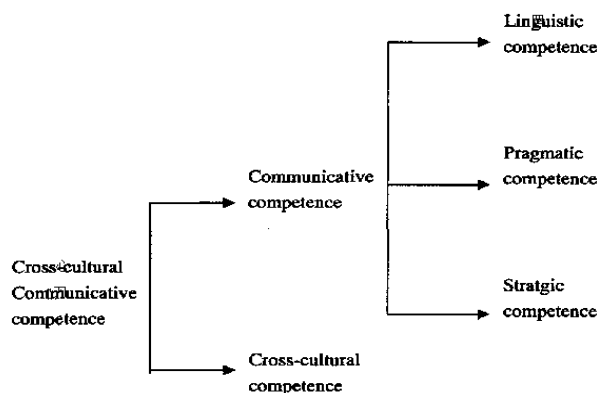
**Mots clé:** La compétence de communication; Les stratégies de communication; Le modèle d'enseignement

ZHANG Yuanyuan (2011). Non-English Major College Students' English Communicative Competence and Communicative Strategic Development. *Canadian Social Science*, 7(4), 190-197. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/j.css.1923669720110704.050> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.css.1923669720110704.050>

## 1. THEORETICAL BASIS

Syntactic Structure by Chomsky in 1957 symbolizes the

arrival of transformational generative grammar, with two kernel concepts as “competence”, and “performance”. In reference to language, competence is your underlying knowledge of the system of a language—its rules of grammar, its vocabulary, all the pieces of a language and how those pieces fit together. Performance is the actual production or comprehension of linguistic events. Therefore, Chomsky's point is that a theory of language had to be a theory of competence lest the linguists vainly try to categorize an infinite number of performance variables which are not reflective of the underlying linguistic ability of the speaker-hearer. In Chomsky's theory, competence simply means knowledge of the language system: grammatical knowledge. Yet if a speaker were to produce grammatical sentences without regard to the situations in which they are used, he could certainly be considered deranged. Accordingly competence seen as overall underlying linguistic knowledge and ability ought to include concepts of appropriateness and acceptability— notions which in Chomsky's narrow concept of competence are relegated to the performance. The relationship between language proficiency and communicative competence is gradable, and competence is as a subcategory of language proficiency. The higher the learners' language proficiency level is, the higher their communicative competence is, based on which this study aims to reinforce learners' communicative competence by improving their communicative strategies and consequently improve their language proficiency. Chinese researcher Wen Qiufang (1999) puts forward an original composition of communicative competence in the cultural perspective. (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1**  
**Communicative Competence Model (WEN Qifang, 1999)**

In today's China, English teaching is undergoing a transformation from a test-oriented, teacher-centered classroom teaching to a quality-oriented, student-centered classroom teaching mode. The conventional English teaching approach is characterized by grammatical competence learning (like vocabulary, sentence structure etc.), the result of which may be, as Leonard Newmark (1966) said, that the one who knows perfectly the structures taught in class cannot know the way to get his cigarette lit by a stranger when he has no matches is to say: "Do you have a light?" or "Got a match?" or "Do you have fire?" or "Do you have illumination?" or "Are you a match's owner?" As a result, we believe that there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless, which reformulates communicative competence.

Accordingly, classroom teaching should respond to the problem of communicative incompetence and transform from the advancement of linguistic competence to the emphasis on communicative competence. The most concerted reflection of it is on syllabus design. If we formerly regarded language learning as principally a question of acquiring structures, then it is natural that the items appearing on our syllabus inventory should have been structures. If we then reformulate our aims to include the "teaching of use", then it would seem equally natural that our inventories should have to include items of use. After all, the ultimate purpose of language learning is not just merely to know about the language itself as a code, but to apply it to communication with people under different linguistic circumstances.

## 2. RESEARCH SURVEY

This questionnaire aims to explore the current state of non-English major students' employment of communication strategies in Chinese universities, and lay a foundation for further research on communication strategies cultivation in class teaching.

### 2.1 Research Hypotheses

Here are three hypotheses (H for short) proposed and expected to be addressed in the research.

H1: Non-English majors know little about the communicative strategies, especially as a technical term.

H2: Almost all non-English majors employ communicative strategies virtually either automatically or subconsciously to different extent.

H3: Non-English majors' employment of communicative strategies has a close connection with their language proficiency. Learners with high proficiency employ advanced strategies or effective strategies, while learners with low proficiency employ ineffective strategies.

## 2.2 Research Methodology

### 2.2.1 Subjects

All the 300 subjects (Questionnaire handed out is 300, the percentage of effective data collection is 219) are either freshmen or sophomores from 5 universities across China (Qufu Normal University, Shanghai International Study University, Shandong University, Zao Zhuang College, Lan Zhou University) involving 107 of sciences and 112 of arts. Among all the participants of sciences, 42 are from School of Mathematical Sciences, 65 from College of Life Science; among the participants of arts, 63 are from College of History and Culture, 49 from College of Education, and the total has 117 females and 102 males, 105 freshmen and 114 sophomores.

Inevitably there might be some overlap among individuals in their language proficiency, for the convenience of the research implement all the participants are required to report their score in national entrance examination. Accordingly, they are divided into groups in accordance with their grade: freshmen are viewed as Group Two with lower language proficiency; sophomores are Group One with higher language proficiency. The imbalance between numbers of sciences and arts lies in the different scale of classes and the imbalance of genders result from more females in arts and less in sciences at present.

### 2.2.2 Instruments

To secure research validity, three procedures are ever mentioned by Davis (1995) as:

1<sup>st</sup>. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation, involving "a commitment of time to the research project in terms of duration and frequency".

2<sup>nd</sup>. Triangulation, "by utilizing multiple resources, methods, and investigators".

3<sup>rd</sup>. Thick description, via detailed categorization of patterns with evidence representative of those patterns presented.

In this research both questionnaire and interview are conducted synchronously so as to ensure its reliability and validity.

#### • Questionnaire

Though many experts propose different criteria of communicative strategies, on the basis of Faerch and Kasper (1984) and Dornyei (1995) and in the principles of distinct understanding of the definitions, considering the real research purpose and research subject, 10 strategies are involved in this questionnaire:

1<sup>st</sup>. Avoidance— (Message abandonment: leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties. Topic avoidance: avoiding topic areas or concepts which pose language difficulties.)

2<sup>nd</sup>. Circumlocution or paraphrase— describing or exemplifying the target object or action (eg., the thing you open bottles with for corkscrew).

3<sup>rd</sup>. Approximation— using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target lexical item as closely as possible (eg., ship for sail boat).

4<sup>th</sup>. Word-coinage— creating a non-existing L2 word based on a supposed rule (eg., vegetarianist for vegetarian).

5<sup>th</sup>. Use of all-purpose words— extending a general, empty lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking (eg., the overuse of thing, stuff, make, do as well as using words like thing, ie, what -do-you-call-it).

6<sup>th</sup>. Use of nonlinguistic meaning—mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation.

7<sup>th</sup>. Literal translation— translating literally a lexical item, an idiom, a compound word or structure word from L1 to L2.

8<sup>th</sup>. Code-switching— using a L1 word with L1 pronunciation for a L3 word with L3 pronunciation in L2.

9<sup>th</sup>. Appeal for help— turning to the conversation partner for help either directly (e.g., What do you call...?) or indirectly (e.g., rising intonation, pause, eye contact, puzzled expression).

10<sup>th</sup>. Use of fillers/hesitation devices— using filling words or gambits to fill pauses and to gain time to think (e.g., well, now let me see, as a matter of fact).

Among these 10 strategies, the first two belong to avoidance or reduction strategies, while the last is considered as part of stalling or time-gaining strategies, and these two groups are just named as nonachievement strategies in this research. As a result, the rest of strategies can be representatives of achievement or compensatory strategies.

Then the questionnaire is gradated into 5 ranks respectively as 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. 1=this statement is never true of me. 2=this statement is occasionally true of me. 3=this statement is sometimes true of me, 4=this statement is often true of me, and 5=this statement is always true of me. In order to make the questionnaire more valid, brief examples were listed. With my colleagues' help, the overwhelming majority of the participants are cooperative as no private information in the questionnaire is required. Eventually, all the 219 subjects answer the questionnaire, among which 210 valid questionnaires are returned with 9 not returned for one thing or another. And the result will

be further analyzed.

#### • Interview

The second stage of data collection involves interviews with 18 participants who are casually recruited. The language proficiency of the interviewees is bound to range from high, medium to low. Here what has to be explained is that their language proficiency is just simply judged according to their national entrance examination scores.

In order to secure the direction of the interview and better the effectiveness of the interview, the interview is implemented semi-structured, with questions below:

1<sup>st</sup>. How do you comment on your language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing?

2<sup>nd</sup>. Are you satisfied with current college English teaching? College English is least beneficial to which aspect of language learning? And how to solve it (sort to material, teaching approach, testing system, learning approach or something else)?

3<sup>rd</sup>. What are difficulties do you encounter when communicate in English? (Actually this question is also asked in other ways like do you have any difficulty in using English to express your ideas? )

4<sup>th</sup>. How do you overcome these difficulties?

5<sup>th</sup>. Why do you use this way and why not other ways?( Offer many other ways by exemplification to the students and let them give a further explanation )

6<sup>th</sup>. Do you think it is necessary to have more oral practice at class? If yes, which way do you prefer? If not, why? Which way do you like best?

7<sup>th</sup>. Do you speak English after class (in dormitory or on the way to dining hall etc.)? Do you think that teachers' assignment will be helpful in speaking more English after class?

The first three questions aim at enlightening learners' opinions about factors influencing their communicative strategies employment. However, for the sake of objectivity of the interview, these questions are asked indirectly. The next two questions focus on the appropriate time and way to take communicative strategies training.

At the beginning of the interview, a few more words about myself and greetings to the interviewees make them feel relaxed and willing to talk. During the interview all these five questions are proposed casually, delightedly and flexibly to elicit the interviewees' free expression and active participation so that satisfactory results can be achieved. In the entire process of interview, attention and strong interest in listening to them will stimulate their enthusiasm over speaking. It should be definitely noted that such an environment can ensure the objectivity and validity of the interview.

#### 2.2.3 Procedure

The collected data will be analyzed in a simple way by percentage not just because of the limitation of time but because this survey aims to explicit that learners have the sub-consciousness to employ the communicative

strategies, and it requires to be imparted in classes to strengthen their awareness of utilizing them and eventually improve their communicative competence and strategic competence. While this research itself attaches more importance is how to solve the problems in combination with the classroom teaching.

**Table 1**  
**Percentage of Strategy Employment**

	Group One (105)	Group Two (114)
1' Avoidance Strategies	36%(38/105)	48%(55/114)
2' Circumlocution or Paraphrase	62%(65/105)	77%(88/114)
3' Approximation	78%(82/105)	37%(42/114)
4' Word-coinage	81%(85/105)	44%(50/114)
5' Use of all-purpose words	51%(54/105)	55%(63/114)
6' Use of Nonlinguistic Meaning	67%(70/105)	36%(41/114)
7' Literal Translation	32%(34/105)	34%(39/114)
8' Use of Fillers/Hesitation Devices	88%(92/105)	61%(69/114)
9' Appeal for Help	16%(19/105)	29%(29/114)
10' Generalization	71%(75/105)	63%(72/114)

**Note: Strategies 1' and 2' are avoidance/reduction strategies; 3'-10' are achievement strategies; 11' is the stalling strategy.**

Another set of data is about the survey on non-English majors' knowledge of communicative strategies (Questionnaire handed out is 300, the percentage of effective data collection is 210) (see Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**Knowledge of Communicative Strategies**

Never heard of	Employment of CSs	Necessity of being taught in class teaching
81(170/210)	97%(204/210)	98% (205/210)

### 3.1.1 Finding 1

F1: Though 86% of participants have never heard of the term, most learners have ever employed at least one or two of the strategies.

F1 indicates that most non-English major learners have no knowledge of communication strategies, let alone the awareness of communication strategies employment. The causes may be concluded as: first, there is no bridges between learners and strategies. As non-English majors devote themselves to their major learning and English is always in a subordinate position, some so-called technical terms are neglected by themselves. For another, teachers are always pressed for language points learning, and students are often passive learner instilled with all kinds of knowledge of vocabulary and structures. Plus, time is treasured for each class, and there is little to spare for exclusive explanation of communication strategies.

### 3.1.2 Finding 2

F2: The majority of participants often employ reduction strategies. Group Two employ avoidance and stalling strategies more than Group One. Group One employ achievement strategies more than Group Two.

F2 is consistent with Gao Haihong's (2000) research

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Communicative Strategies and Language Proficiency

As this survey aims to explicit that problems do exist and make barriers in communication, a brief analysis will be made in this sense (see Table 1).

Both groups tend to use reduction strategies but Group One with higher language proficiency employs it less frequent than that of Group Two with lower language proficiency. Such a result displays that the learners with high language proficiency have a solid foundation of English knowledge including vocabulary, sentence structures etc. and are more flexible and smooth in communication; and that learners with low language proficiency tend to avoid the language difficulties as they possess less solid knowledge foundation, but they also realize that it is inappropriate to avoid it frequently. The trouble lies in that they cannot find out an effective way to address it.

### 3.1.3 Finding 3

F3: The employment of strategies has bearing on learners' language proficiency.

F3 tells that Group One with higher language proficiency employ more communicative strategies especially achievement strategies, in contrast Group Two with lower language proficiency just less employ communicative strategies, if they do, more reduction strategies and stalling strategies will be utilized. This result is also in accord with that of Wang Lifei (2002) that the employment of strategies has bearing on learners' language proficiency. Consequently, it can be interpreted that adequate training and cultivation of communicative strategies will promote the improvement their language proficiency.

### 3.1.4 Finding 4

F4: The majority of learners believe that there is a great necessity for these strategies to be applied and taught.

It is verified by F4 that there are 83% learners believe there is a great necessity for these strategies to be applied and taught. For one thing, learners' communicative

competence is unavoidably limited by their language proficiency for lack of elementary language knowledge. Coupled with lack of knowledge and awareness of communicative strategies, the learners especially those with low language proficiency usually possess little ability to fulfill a normal communication. Therefore, they suppose that learning some communicative strategies will be beneficial for the improvement of communicative competence. On the contrary, there are still 17% learners thinking that it does not deserve the efforts exerted on strategies since written English counts more in examination and in practice.

### 3.1.5 Finding 5

F5: There are 89% (16/18) thinking that they are at the level of average or below average in speaking. And 72% (13/18) think that college English teaching is least beneficial to speaking competence. In addition, 33% (6/18) are unsatisfied with college English teaching, and the priority to cope with is the teaching approach.

To conclude, the findings of the survey are in great accord with the previous hypotheses. So the survey affirm that: firstly, a few learners have the knowledge of the technical terms such as communicative strategies and the others. Secondly, learners' employment of communicative strategies has an intimate bearing on their language proficiency, which is inclined to be in positive proportion to each other. Consequently, adequate training of communicative strategies will promote learners' improvement of language proficiency, in particular, the communicative competence and strategic competence. The direct effect of communicative strategies employment is the improvement in communication and oral competence. Thirdly, as component of English classroom teaching, communicative strategies are likely to be trained and taught as a device of stimulating learners' interest and confidence in speaking with good arrangement and design of syllabus.

## 4. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLEMENT

### 4.1 Conventional Teaching Pattern ("TTT")

#### 4.1.1 Test-oriented

The classical teaching approach has long been put in question in the contemporary literature. Shu Dingfang (2006) summarizes conventional foreign language teaching pattern as "PPP": presentation, practice and production. And here I am willing to generalize Chinese college English teaching as "TTT": test-oriented, teacher-centered, and terrible-ambience.

TTT is the toxin of test-oriented education. It is formed into being in the process of students' preparing for a great variety of tests. The tests are usually concerning the elementary knowledge of a language like vocabulary, grammar, structure and so on, therefore, learners are habitually concentrate on the practice of these items

with teachers' even more focus on them which indeed functions in tests. Eventually, classroom teaching evolves into language points teaching. Likewise, teachers indulge themselves in summarize all the grammatical items or the usage of vocabulary, especially at the stage of elementary and secondary education. When time slips, many English learner put on great expectation to find a way out of all exercises and practice of grammars at colleges, however, the barely identical teaching approach in universities increasingly depresses them. Finally, they accept such an unpleasant fact under the pressure of CET4.

According to College English Curriculum Requirements (2004), the aim of college English teaching is to cultivate students' comprehensive ability of English application, especially that in listening and speaking, so that they are enabled to contact effectively either at work or in social activities with both spoken and written English; and in the meantime to improve students' independent learning ability and comprehensive cultural makings so as to meet the demand of China's economic development and international exchange. It is evident that such a requirement protests the teaching approach focusing on language competence, but advocates another more effective teaching approach to improve students' comprehensive capability in language performance, particularly in the communicative competence. This paper is designed to have an elementary exploration on college English classroom teaching.

#### 4.1.2 Teacher-centered

In the traditional classroom, the teacher is in charge and control the learning. A vivid picture of conventional English teaching is that students in a crowded big classroom rustle on their desk, while a teacher is talking a blue streak with little consideration of materials, learners' learning process and individual needs. And the materials are clearly and unequivocally a scholar's manual of grammar (Janice Yalden, 1987). The relationship between teachers and learners is the typical teacher-centered methodology. The immediate impact on learners is their incompetence in communication due to lack of the communication practices. In the classroom teaching, most of the time is teacher-centered talking which results in the students' lack of opportunities of speaking. Or sometimes teachers' frequent and habitual correction of the students' mistakes and communicative deficiency discourage the students' desire to interact.

#### 4.1.3 Terrible-ambience

This word is virtually not in consistency with the other two in word building, however, there is no other better words for it in my reservoir.

As the old saying goes "Rome is not build in one day." The ambience of English teaching is not accomplished at one sit. Owing to the two points mentioned above, plus the study pressure hanging over their head all day long, especially that of their major courses, the ambience of

English learning is hard to meet both learners and teachers satisfaction. Learners are dozy and teachers repeat what the materials say. Some college English teachers even do not speak target language since the learners are not obliged to be good speakers of English. That makes the situation worse, some students do not attend class or play truant as they are totally capable of self-culture.

#### 4.1.4 Effect of Conventional Teaching Pattern

The traditional teaching pattern has turned out to be effective for acquiring a stock of basic vocabulary and simple grammatical structures by grading grammatical exercises on sentence structures and vocabulary and a collection of intensive oral drills if they are indeed to be practiced. This is simply based on the behaviorist doctrine that language learning consists primarily in establishing a set of habits, that is, a set of responses conditioned to occur with certain stimuli which may be either situations or words in a syntactic frame (Allen & Widdowson, 1974). As a result, the large amount of time and money has been plunged into developing a battery of elementary language teaching materials to cater for the current teaching approach with the objective of impart the language competence.

The traditional teaching approach is usually in the stereotype: vocabulary and language points teaching, along with sentence structure analysis and sentence-making via either oral interpretation or translation so as to consolidate and reinforce the memory and use of them; explanation of text, coupled with situational presentation along with structural practice; exercises of sufficient variety to sustain students' interest. Therefore, the principal aim is to promote knowledge of the language system, to develop the learner's competence by means of controlled performance (H.G. Widdowson, 1978). But in this way only the ability of sentence composition is improved.

And the effect of the traditional class teaching pattern is that it spares little chance for learners to develop his own learning strategies and confines learners development of communicative competence and strategic competence due to lack of opportunities of speaking. As Naiman (1978) elaborates in his book *The Good Language Learner* that in classroom language learning the use of carefully prepared course materials and the great number of question-and-answer exercises, exclusively directed by the teachers, somehow disguise the fact that the learner should play a part in making decisions and be allowed to exercise personal choice....too close, step-by-step direction of language classes may not always produce the desire effect because the learner has too little chance of developing his own learning strategies.

## 4.2 New Teaching Approach ("LLL")

It seems that people always attribute communicative incompetence of non-English major college students to various reasons: teachers, curriculum, textbook

even. However "it is seldom that the validity of the recommended approach is called into question."(H.G. Widdowson, 1978) In essence, the root of the problem is in the approach itself. In the cultivation a different approach may be needed to match the essentially different role which English assumes in higher education (Allen & Widdowson, 1974). As summarized here "LLL".

### 4.2.1 Language-performance-oriented

There is a need for a new approach to language teaching which will shift the focus of attention from the grammatical to the communicative properties of language, in order to show the learners how the language system is used to express individual ideas.

It seems a fabulous mistake that the knowledge of how sentences are applied to communication comes automatically after a knowledge of how sentences are composed and what meaning (called as "signification" by Widdowson, 1978) they have as linguistic units. In fact, there is no equation between the linguistic forms and communicative functions. Learners should be taught how to apply these linguistic forms to communication, and how to address problems when the communication is held back, in other words, how to employ the communicative strategies to improve learners' communicative competence and strategic competence.

### 4.2.2 Learner-centered

The role of teachers is multifaceted and they provide support by filling in gaps in knowledge as needs arise, by helping create links with previous learning and by supplying the appropriate vocabulary and expressions. The role of the teacher is indeed paramount in the early phases of oral interaction. It is the teacher who puts the wind in the sails of interaction and who promotes and nourishes it constantly. That is, teachers enable students to take control of their own learning and interaction in English. Teachers are expected to assume multiple roles as facilitator, monitor and motivator, assessor, participant and manager. It seems that the more emphasis is placed on communicative tasks, the less there will be on the linearity of the relationship of linguist to teacher.

While in college English teaching with the purpose of improving learners communication competence, learners are expected to be the class center by playing an active role in the learning process under the guidance of teachers. Learners should be contributors, initiators, imitators as well as receivers. That is, learners are the passive recipient of outside stimuli; learners are the interactors and negotiators capable of giving as well as taking; learners are listeners and performers having little control over the content of learning; learners are involved in a process of personal growth; learners must take responsibility for their own learning, developing autonomy and skills in learning how to learn.

### 4.2.3 Light-hearted Ambience

A classroom should be a place with a comfortable

and inspiring environment where students feel at ease and a place where teacher-student and student-student interaction may occur spontaneously and naturally. It is the teacher that takes the responsibility for creating such an atmosphere by personal attraction, extensive learning and fantastic individuality. But only the teacher cannot fulfill the task on his/her own. It requires the learners' cooperation and interaction. We have to admit a fact that a light-hearted ambience is definitely beneficial to stir students' interest in learning and communicating as well as their creativity.

However, light-hearted ambience alone is not sufficient to demonstrate an ideal learning atmosphere. As for many teachers and learners, the perfect ambience of class teaching should be "tight, delight, active, and illuminative". "Tight" is in terms of the time distribution and the rhythm of the class; "delight" is used for the sake of rhyme, actually refers to "delighted" which means both teachers and learner should feel delighted and enjoyable in the classroom activities. "Active" refers to the interaction of teacher-student and student-student, and learners can participate in all kinds of activities on their initiative. "Illuminative" refers to the teaching effect, learners can be illuminated and inspired as greatly as possible.

### 4.3 Training of Communicative Strategies

#### 4.3.1 Task-based Approach

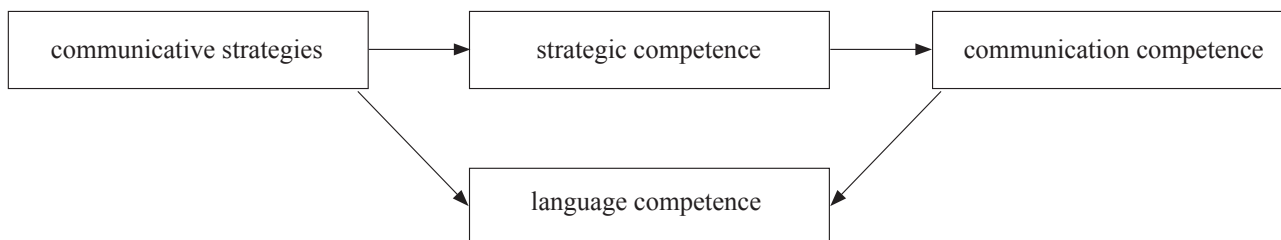
At present, the domestic literature on communicative strategies hangs mainly on the introduction of the alien theories, few is about practical classroom teaching of college English. Task-based approach enables the classroom work becomes the performance of tasks rather than the language required to perform themselves.

Task-based methodology is developed by research with native speakers (Yule, 1982) for the objective evaluation of the communicative effectiveness of English native-speaker adolescents in using the spoken language. In this

methodology, a set of transactional language tasks such as narrative, descriptive, and instructional was developed, in which a speaker has to transfer some information to a listener who needs this information in order to complete a task. The aim of the task-based methodology was to set up a situation in which the speaker alone possesses the relevant knowledge about the information needed by the listener in order to complete a task. Therefore the responsibility of the speaker is to determine which aspects of the information is relevant and valid to the task at hand, and provides the listener with the aspects of the information in a most immediate and convenient way without yielding any confusion or ambiguity. This methodology is quite effective in evaluating both the effectiveness of second language learner and in eliciting the use of communication strategies.

#### 4.3.2 Metacommunicative Awareness

It is necessary to reinforce learners' metacommunicative awareness. Learners' knowledge of communicative strategies will have an enormous impact on their employment of those strategies, therefore, they should be taught the function of communicative strategies and the communicative potential of strategy employment. Then encourage them to employ these strategies consciously. What is most important is to impart the learners with how to employ these strategies in different communication situations, as Faerch and Kasper (1983) state that "what learners do not necessarily know in advance is what strategy types are most adequate under various communicative conditions". Therefore "increasing students' metacommunicative awareness is an important aspect in developing their strategic competence in foreign language teaching." The relationship among communicative strategies, strategic competence, communication competence, and language competence goes as following (Figure 2).



**Figure 2**  
Relationship Among CS, SC, CC, and LC

It is necessary to elicit the effective and ineffective strategies in communication to learners so that they may make a corresponding practice to different communication situation. "Conscious-raising based on learners' own performance and experience is a fruitful way of developing procedural knowledge (Haastrup, 1991) " For instance, teachers can ask the students to make a face-to-

face description of the Lantern Festival, find out some of their problems in communicative strategies and then point out that these L1-based strategies does little benefit to language communication. As a result, students can assess by themselves whether or not the strategies are useful and practical in communication.

### 4.3.3 Achievement Strategies

Faerch and Kasper (1983, 1986) claim the importance of achievement strategies from a pedagogic point of view that achievement strategies can help language learners convey rather than reduce their original communicative intention and make the existing knowledge more easily accessible). While Haastrup and Phillipson (1983) provide a continuum going from “relatively less” to “relatively more” effective strategies to explain the degree of effectiveness of achievement strategies (Figure 3).



**Figure 3**  
**Effectiveness of Achievement Strategies (Haastrup and Phillipson, 1983)**

Accordingly it is necessary to elicit the most effective strategies in communication to learners so that they may make a corresponding practice according to different communication situation.

Haastrup and Phillipson (1983) point out that “IL (L2)-based strategies have great potential for learning to communicative success” and counsel that “paraphrase is a strategy that has the highest potential for communication success”. Accordingly, teachers should encourage learners to use more achievement strategies, especially the use of IL-based strategies like generalization, paraphrase, description, restructuring, exemplification, coinage and so forth Dornyei (1995).

## CONCLUSION

It is generally found that communicative strategies have an intimate relationship with communicative competence. Learners’ effective and efficient employment of communicative strategies is the revelation of their strategic competence as well as communicative competence. And with the communicative strategies training, it is likely to improve learners’ communicative competence.

1<sup>st</sup>. Communicative strategies training at classes do not necessarily cost a lot of teaching time and must be carried out formally. It can be implemented and permeated into every link of classroom teaching. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Communicative strategies training should not be monotonous in form. It should be combined with the other language competence learning and manifold forms of practice with flexibility. For example, locating a place on a map, designing an advertisement of a product. 3<sup>rd</sup>. Multi-media means ought to be used properly to stir students’ interest and work as the complement of class. 4<sup>th</sup>. Overtraining or overemphasis of communicative strategies training will do nothing good to language performance. 5<sup>th</sup>. Communication context is another factor affecting communicative strategies employment as claimed by the participants in

the interview. Authentic language context and activities a bit above learners’ current proficiency will be beneficial to learners’ strategy training. Ellis (1985) suggests that communicative strategies are less adopted in formal functional classroom than in authentic language context, especially when accuracy is emphasized rather than fluency. 6<sup>th</sup>. The training of strategies should be extensive and frequent just as Chamot and Rubin (1994) hold that it is not a particular strategy that leads to improved language performance, but the effective management of a repertoire of strategies. 7<sup>th</sup>. A large amount of preparation and assignment should be finished in learners’ spare time (in or on the way to their dormitory) and I suggest the word “Dormitory Assignment”. For example, ask students to make a role play as a group of two. Suppose you two are a reporter from CBS interviews a pilot escaping from the Bermuda Triangle: exchange of greetings; necessary inquiry about the pilot’s health conditions; the weather conditions; and how he manages to get out of it.

## REFERENCES

- Allen, J. P. B., & Widdowson, H. G. (1974). Teaching the Communicative Use of English. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*.
- Chomsky, Noam. (1957). Syntactic Structures. Hague: Mouton.
- Dornyei, Z. (1995, 29). On the Teachability of Communication Strategies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 55-58.
- Faerch, C., & G. Kasper. (1983). *Strategies in Inter-language Communication*. London: Longman.
- Faerch, C., & G. Kasper. (1984). Two Ways of Defining Communication Strategies. *Language Learning*, 45-63.
- Faerch, C., & G. Kasper. (1986). Strategic Competence in Foreign Language Teaching. In G. Kasper (Ed.), *Learning, Teaching and Communication in the Foreign Language Classroom*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- GAO Haihong. (2000). A Study of Chinese EFL Learners Strategic Competence in Oral Communication-belief and Utilization. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 53.
- Haastrup, K., & R. Phillipson. (1983). Achievement Strategies in Learner/Speaker Interaction. In C. Faerch & Kasper (Ed.), *Strategies Inter-language Communication*. London: Longman.
- Naiman, N. et al. (1978). *The Good Language Learner*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Newmark, L. (1966). How not to Interfere with Language Learning. *International Journal of American Linguistics*.
- WANG Lifei. (2002). An Experiment on Teaching of Communication Strategies to Chinese EFL Learners. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 49-52.
- WEN Qiufang. (1999). *Spoken English Testing and Teaching*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Widdowson, G. H. (1978). *Teaching Language as Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yule, G. (1982). The Objective Assessment of Aspects of Spoken English. *World Language English*, 193-199.