

1.1.4 Using communication strategies in English as a Lingua Franca interactions

Transcript

Slide 1

Welcome to a new section of our Course: 'Using communication strategies in English as a Lingua Franca interactions'. This is a sub-section of the 'ELF' section. In this segment of the Course we will discuss the use of communication strategies and we will focus our attention on the importance of introducing them in language teaching.

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First of all, we will define communication strategies considering the pedagogical implications of strategy learning in the ELT. In the second part we will introduce 'mediation strategies' as defined in the CEFR and a special focus we will devoted to ELF accommodation strategies.

Slide 3

Before we begin, let's think about your teaching practices and watch the video "Communicative Strategy". To what extent do you incorporate communication strategies in your own classrooms? Try to think about how your learners may benefit from strategy training in your classes. After watching the video please consider these questions and click the link under the video to share your views. Pause the video now to do this activity.

Slide 4

But how can we define 'communication strategies'? Strategies are applied in communication to manage different kind of linguistic problems and interferences due to lexical, syntactical or phonological gaps, sociolinguistic or pragmatic or intercultural interferences. Applying communication strategies speakers show a cooperative attitude, based on the exploitation of linguistic resources as well as paralinguistic and extralinguistic cues, such as intonation, non-verbal language, gestures, eye contact. The use of strategies in communication reveal the constant attempt to manage interactions by speakers, negotiating meaning and intentions.

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Strategies have been studied since 1970s. First scholars used the term 'communication strategies' in the scientific debate about interlanguage and tried to give a classification of strategies in cross-cultural communication. In this sense, strategies can be defined in several ways.

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And are always related to oral interactions. They may be conversational strategies, or cooperative strategies, they are related to discourse or sometimes they are defined compensation strategies. In other words, the term 'communication strategies' is mainly used as an umbrella term to cover a wide range of strategies and devices that speakers apply to overcome communicative problems and fill semantic gaps.

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In introducing strategies, a special attention is needed for the new forms of interactions related to new technologies and the computer-mediated strategies applied by speakers who are shaping written interactions according to new forms of communication. The traditionally offline correspondence by letter, fax and e-mail, now is characterized by the use of online written interactions, such as chats, blogs and the so-called social networks, where speakers adopt new computer-mediated strategies to communicate and overcome communicative problems.

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In the definition of strategies, we may consider different aspects. Some strategies for example are used to cope with the expression of meaning, for example to fill a semantic gap when the term is not available, by means of synonyms, approximations, paraphrasing. For example, "It's the person who sells meat in a shop" instead of "the butcher". In other cases, strategies are applied to negotiate meaning in the attempt to establish meaning from both sides in the interaction. In these cases, speakers use forms of asking for, giving help, or assistance, as in the utterance "Can you say that again, please?".

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Other strategies are employed to manage a conversation, especially difficult aspects of the dialogue, such as opening and closing an interaction, "taking the floor", or replying, for example: "Sorry to interrupt you, but I would like to ask you...": it's a way to take the floor in a conversation or gaining time. Paralinguistic and extra-linguistic strategies are widely used by speakers in conversation since they are able to complement the verbal communication settings. Non-verbal cues are represented by the use of volume, pauses, gestures, eye contact.

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Another set of strategies is represented by expressions used by speakers to monitor the interaction: a sort of metalinguistic strategies employed to manage and control the dialogue and the exchange, for example asking for corrections or comments, checking the reactions of our interlocutors, repairing misunderstandings or breakdowns, for example “I’m sorry if I asked you a personal question”, which is a sort of metalinguistic comment on something said before.

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In general, scholars report about other strategies and include in the classification of ‘communication strategies’: the translation and foreignizing of an utterance when speakers use an L1 word with an L2 pronunciation, as well as code-switching, switching from one language to another or from one variety to another one and even omission when a gap is left in one’s speech.

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Considering the strategies that we have just introduced, click the link under the video to complete this Activity. Can you match each strategy with the corresponding action? Please, pause the video now to complete this activity.

Slide 13

Communication strategies are particularly important in developing oral skills, especially in the ELT classroom. Teaching and learning communication strategies promote learners’ self-control and flexibility in the use of a language. Reflective activities on communication strategies may help to bridge the gap between the experiences that our learners can get inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, they develop learners’ interlanguage skills and have an influence on the learning performance and satisfaction. In this sense, practicing strategies, oral skills and linguistic and metalinguistic autonomy are enhanced with an impact on the active role and responsibility for what and how our learners communicate, especially in cross-cultural communication.

Slide 14

In this section we will also discuss the special focus that has been given to mediation strategies in the new scales provided by the CEFR. In the 2018 Companion Volume new scales for mediation have been presented. The notion of mediation has been studied in different social sciences, from psychology to pedagogy and the Council of Europe has produced new descriptors for mediation in the last decades. More precisely, in the project emphasis is given to

the idea that teachers and students should be aware of the relevant role of mediation and training mediation strategies could help to develop education through a social and emotional dimension. Mediation skills should be trained by means of problem-solving tasks which enhance and promote plurilingualism and the language education based on a social-emotional perspective. In the CEFR mediation strategies are presented in two ways: as strategies to explain a new concept, in order to linking to previous knowledge, adapt language and breaking down complicated information; and strategies applied to simplify a text, amplifying it, or highlighting key-information or eliminating repetition and excluding what is not relevant.

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In the Companion Volume a strong emphasis to the idea that mediation strategies can create space and conditions for communicating and learning a language in plurilingual contexts. Speakers, learners as well as teacher act as social agents able to create bridges and help to construct meaning and negotiate sense and intentions throughout a cross-linguistic mediation. Mediation and its strategies are seen as processes and means to pass new information in the appropriate form, written or oral ones.

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And the new scales introduced in the 2018 Companion Volume are based on three main activities which are 'mediating a text', 'mediating concepts' and 'mediating communication'. Mediating a text involves passing on to another person the content of a text which otherwise they do not have access to, because of linguistic, cultural, conceptual, semantic limits. Mediating concepts instead involves the construction and elaboration of meaning throughout a facilitating process which leads to a conceptual exchange and development. Mediating communication instead aims at facilitating understanding and shaping successful communication between speakers acting as mediators. In this sense, the mediator tries to have an influence on the sharing of content and meaning especially in professional situations like diplomacy, negotiation, pedagogy and dispute resolution, but also in everyday interactions or workplace exchanges.

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Bearing in mind the set of mediation strategies introduced in the CEFR, click the link under the video to complete this Activity. Can you match each activity with the corresponding mediation scale? Pause the video now to complete this activity.

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In the previous slides we have considered the importance of introducing strategies, communication and mediation strategies in the ELT classroom, and a

final focus is here devoted to the investigation of ELF spoken interactions where strategies are applied through accommodative processes and in ELF interactions the use of strategies in communication is particularly related and emphasized by the shaping of the English language standards according to communicative purposes. In communication strategies, ELF users shape their ability to express and share mutual intelligibility more than their language proficiency. In ELF spoken interactions meaning negotiation as well as communicative breakdown are very frequent. In these cases, strategies applied are related to the use of repetitions, L1 interferences, and transfers, backchannels, grammatical norm-deviations, the creative use of language.

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ELF researchers are particularly interested in analysing accommodation strategies. The emerging ELF research about accommodation strategies shows how important is to investigate not only on accommodation processes, the role played on accommodation in ELT practices. In this sense, ELT pedagogy and teachers' attitudes to ELF should be revised in order to integrate in multilingual and multicultural contexts the development of oral skills and competencies in the negotiation of meaning and the cooperative processes aimed at reaching mutual understanding in interactions.

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In migration contexts ELF interactions are very frequent and in this kind of exchanges accommodation strategies are widely exploited by speakers in order to be mutually understood. In the following extract you will read a short dialogue between a Legal Advisor and an asylum-seeker, where you will detect the use of various communication strategies and among them accommodation strategies typical of an ELF interaction. After reading the extract, please consider these questions: Which communication strategies can you identify? Would you ever use such written (or spoken) authentic materials showing real-life ELF interactions in your classes? Click the link under the video to read this dialogue and share your views at the Forum.

Slide 22

Our course is particularly focused on new trends and dynamics in ELT, especially in an ELF perspective. The previous overview of strategies and approaches to oral interactions outlined the importance of introducing in our classes the practice of communication, mediation and accommodation strategies. In this perspective, new tasks and activities could be introduced in the emerging multilingual and multicultural classrooms, by means of role plays or simulations where learners can have the opportunity to practice, to put into practice

strategies that they will use in their daily life, in their daily conversations and exchanges. It is important to invite learners to consider and reflect on their use of strategies in communication, in negotiation of meaning, in accommodation processes. In this way they will become aware of their personal use of strategies and in this way learners will understand what strategies are and how they can be useful and when they have to be used and activated. This is particularly important in multilingual settings and multicultural dimensions in order to promote the construction of a cooperative cross-cultural communicative environment, at school and in their future professional dimensions.