A study of communicative strategies in upper-secondary school

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Abstract

The present study investigates communicative strategies used by a group of four upper-secondary L2 learners of English. To be able to reach this goal, I have recorded and transcribed a conversation between these students in order to detect natural communication. The communicative strategies I have looked for were: pauses and hesitations, questions, code-switching and message abandonment. Previous research on communicative strategies is divided into two different fields. These two approaches define and classify communication strategies as either interactional or psycholinguistic. The definition and classification of communicate strategies depends viz. on what kind of approach is used.

Keywords: Communicative strategies, code-switching, message abandonment, pause hesitation, questions, compensatory strategies, L1, L2, inter-language, target language, taxonomy

Table of contents

1.   Introduction

There has been extensive research on communicative strategies (hereafter CSs) since the seventies, and during this period inter-language (hereafter IL) studies have expanded and researchers have identified many different types of inter-languages (hereafter ILs) (Færch & Kasper 1983:xv). There has been a growing interest in the ways in which second language (hereafter L2) learners make use of their IL resources in attempting to develop L2 competency.

CSs are usually associated with spoken language and research has shown that students tend to use various CSs when they are unable to express what they want to say because of their lack of resources in their L2 (Hedge 2000:52). When learners experience that fluency in their first language (hereafter L1) does not follow the same pattern as their L2, a gap is created in the knowledge of their L2. These gaps can take many forms: a word, a phrase, a structure, a tense marker or an idiom (Bialystok 1990:1). In order to overcome that gap, learners have two options: they can either leave the original communicative goal or they can try to reach other alternative plans and use other linguistic means that they have at their disposal. "Furthermore students can compensate for their lack in resources in the L2 by either changing their original intention or by using other ways of expression" (Hedge 2000:52).

These two ways of dealing with a communicative difficulty have been referred to as Reduction Strategies[1] and Achievement strategies, sometimes called Compensatory Strategies[2]. Both of these strategies are used for the purpose of maintaining communication, however the crucial difference between these main strategies is that when it comes to reduction strategies the solution is based on omission, whereas with compensatory strategies the solution is based on commission (Poulisse 1990:1).

Ellis (1994) suggests that communicative strategies be seen as a set of skills, which learners use in order to overcome their inadequacies in the target language. When students fail to communicate because of their limited knowledge in the target language they have to find a way to communicate in other ways, for example by imitating sounds, code-switching or avoiding the topic.

Second language acquisition research claims that it is good for learners to use their L2 provided in a point of need, in a meaningful context, created by themselves in order to reach a better acquisition (Hedge 2000:53). However, it is not clear whether CSs lead to second language acquisition or whether they merely solve a current problem (Tornberg 2000:42). There has indeed been disagreement amongst L2 researchers when it comes to CSs, and consequently Cook (1988:120) and Ellis (1994:396) divide research about CSs into two different approaches when it comes to interpreting CSs. These two ways of defining CSs are divided into sociolinguistically oriented researchers such as Tarone (1980), who treats CSs as a discourse strategy where learners interact with each other, and psycholingustically oriented researchers such as Færch and Kasper (1984), Poulisse (1990), and Kellerman (1997), who treat CSs in terms of intra-individual speech processes and cognitive processing. The definition of CSs very much depends on what kind of theoretical approach is applied and therefore the identification and classification of CSs depends upon it.

1.1 Aim and question

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[1]Reduction strategies are associated with avoiding, changing or abandoning a communicative goal (Faerch and Kasper 1983:36).
[2]Characterized by the use of alternative communicative resources.

The aim of this essay is to identify and investigate the use of specific communicative strategies used by four upper secondary Swedish L2 learners of English in interaction with other students in order to keep the conversation going.

1.2 The interactional approach

The first study on the use of CSs was made by Tomas Váradi (1973), who raised the question of empirical work in CS research and claimed that learners needed to be put into interaction with native speakers in order for researchers to detect the effect of CSs (Færch & Kasper 1983:94). Tarone (1977), among others, has adopted the interactional approach and defines CSs as an attempt of two speakers to come to an understanding in a situation where the they do not share the necessary meaning (Ellis 1994:396)."mutual attempts of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared" (Tarone, 1980:420 in Cook 1988:120).

In this approach learners are mutually trying to keep the conversation going, and this is sometimes called a co-operative strategy. The interactional approach acknowledges both reduction strategies and achievement strategies, which is typically shown in the taxonomy favored by these researchers.

When things go wrong in the conversation, both participants try to come up with an appropriate CS to get out of the difficulty. Tarone (1980) claims that CSs involves both speaker and listener, and when these two participants stumble upon a problem in understanding each other they fall back on three main types of CSs: avoidance, paraphrase and transfer. Avoidance deals with the notion of not wanting to talk about things you know are difficult to express in a second language situation, which can be either whole topics or individual words. Paraphrase is used by the learners to compensate for a target language word that is not known, and transfer occurs when learners fall back on their first language. Appeal for assistance and mime are also mentioned as CSs by Tarone, appeal for assistance occurs when learners ask for help, for example by asking '*What is this*?' and mime occurs in situations where learners use other explanations than verbal, for example by miming '*blowing out candles*' when singing '*Happy birthday*'. However these strategies will not be consulted in this study. Below is a list of Tarone's taxonomy (1977) consulted from Cook (1988:120) with modifications.

Avoidance is divided into:

Topic avoidance: Not saying what he or she originally had in mind.

Message abandonment: Giving up speaking in mid-stream.

Paraphrase is divided into:

Paraphrase strategies rely on the speaker to solve the problem through the second language, whereas transfer strategies rely on the knowledge of the first language.

Approximation: This happens when a learner is searching for a word he or she does not know, and falls back on using a word that has a close meaning with the intended word, such as '*animal*' for '*horse*'.

Word coinage: Another form of paraphrase that is used to make up a word to substitute for the word that is not known, such as '*airball*' for '*balloon*'.

Circumlocution: When L2 learners talk round the word '*when you make a container*' for '*pottery*'.

Transfer is divided into:

Literal translation: This occurs when learners use a word-for-word translation from a language other than the L2. An example of this is when a speaker of Swedish '*bus stop place*' for the Swedish word '*busshållsplats*' (Palmberg 1979:59).

Language switch: In the case of language switch (frequently called code-switching today) speakers can use a native word of expression, un-translated into the IL utterance. For example a Swedish L2 learner of English can say '*in the mitten*' for '*in the middle*' (Palmberg 1979:59).

Aston (1993) is also a researcher that is concerned with understanding what happens between the speakers. He focuses on conversational situations in which speakers create *support*, meaning 'shared attitudes to an experience which the participants have in common, typically expressed through routines of agreement' and *solidarity,* meaning 'shared attitudes to an experience that is specific to only one participant, which is communicated through routines of affiliation, compliments and apologies '(Aston 1993:232). He uses the term *comity strategies,* which speakers use when sharing feeling and attitudes, rather than knowledge and ideas.

A study by Bialystok (1990), similar to Tarone's (1977) about social strategies, showed the distribution of CSs used by young girls. She collected 324 utterances from 18 nine-year-old English speaking girls learning French. The subjects were instructed to identify geometrical shapes described by another. Poulisse's (1990:77) study showed that the frequency of avoidance strategy was indeed surprisingly low, with only 4 per cent compared to 92 per cent for paraphrase. The most frequent type of paraphrase used was circumlocution, occurring as much as 80 per cent.

Cook (2008:107) suggests that CSs are important for the teacher who wants to teach some sort of social skills to the students, and if students are to become successful in communicating with other people in their L2 they need to practice and learn ways of dealing with conversations where they can encounter problems in understanding. However, Rampton (1997:281) argues that social interaction is not relevant when it comes to CSs, and that CSs in the L2 are the same as in the L1, and therefore should not be a part of any language teaching curriculum.

1.3 The Psycholinguistic approach

The properties of the psycholinguistic approach deal with the cognitive processes that are occurring within the learner, and hold the belief that learners are either aware or not aware of the fact that they have a plan when it comes to solving a problem in order to make themselves understood. The work of Færch and Kasper (1983:34) presents a model of two different phases for speech production: a planning phase and an execution phase. The aim of these phases is to help the learners to develop speech which can be executed and allow the speaker to reach his communicative goal (Ellis 1994:398). CSs are seen as a part of this planning and therefore the goals that are mentioned are related to the activity of communication (Færch and Kasper 1983:24).

When learners are confronted with a problem in communication they can either choose to apply an avoidance strategy, which means that the learners can change their original communicative goal using a reduction strategy or they can apply an achievement strategy and try to go through with their original goal and create some sort of an achievement strategy. Færch and Kasper (1983) argue that the choices of strategies learners use are not only based on the type of strategy they apply, they also depend on the kind of problem they are facing (Færch & Kasper 1983:37).

Reduction strategies are further divided into formal and functional: Formal reduction strategies dealing with avoidance of particular L2 linguistic forms whether in pronunciation, in syntax or in morphemes, and functional reduction strategy dealing with avoidance of specific types of function such as speech acts, topics and some modality markers (Ellis 1994:398).

When learners use achievement strategies they attempt to solve communication problems by expanding their communicative resources (Coder 1983:16) instead of using reduction in order to avoid the intended communicative goal. Achievement strategies are further divided into cooperative strategies and non-cooperative strategies. Below is an explanation of the achievement strategies used in Færch and Kasper (1984) adapted from Cook (2008:108).

Code-switching: When learners rely on another language than the target language – '*Do you want to have some ah Zinzen*?' (The German word for '*interest*').

Foreignerization: Using an L1 expression in the L2 with minimal adaptation. For example: when a Swede uses the word '*green things*' for '*vegetables*'. Also called direct translation.

Substitution: Speaker substitutes one word for another, saying '*if*' for '*whether*' if the cannot remember whether '*whether*' has an '*h*'.

Generalization: L2 speakers use a more general word rather than a more particular one, such as '*animal*' for '*rabbit*' that is, shifting up from the basic level of vocabulary to the superordinate.

Description: Speakers cannot remember the word for 'kettle' and so describe it as '*the thing to cook water in*'.

Exemplification: Speakers give an example rather than the general term, such as '*cars*' for '*transport*', that is, shift down a level.

Word coining: That is, making up a word when a speaker does not know it, such as inventing an imaginary French word '*heurot*' for '*watch*'.

Restructuring: The speaker has another attempt at the same sentence, as in a learner struggling to find the rare English word '*sibling*': '*I have two- er- one sister and one brother*'.

Avoidance strategies are divided into Formal reduction strategies and Functional reduction strategies. When the learner avoids a linguistic form or has difficulty with one of the three linguistic levels phonology, morphology and grammar, a formal reduction strategy is applied, which means that the learner can use his or her IL system to reach the communicative goal. If the learner encounters problems in the planning phase or in the execution phase they can adopt a functional reduction strategy and reduce his communicative goal in order to avoid the problem (Færch and Kasper 1983:43).

2.   Previous research

As mentioned before, there has been extensive research on CSs but researchers have not been able to establish a universal definition of CSs. Most of the studies focus on defining CSs, and developing taxonomies that could be used to classify them. Research has mainly focused on lexical problems such as insufficient vocabulary and fluency rather than other levels of language; therefore we know little about the strategies learners apply to overcome grammatical problems in interaction with others.

There are many different ways of identifying CSs within L2 learners, and many of the researchers during the seventies used a method which was based on retelling picture stories and describing geometrical shapes. This task required the learners to look at pictures describing a story, which they were to retell in their own words. Researchers such as Varadi (1973), Tarone (1977), Palmberg (1979) and Erwin (1979) used this approach to detect CSs (Poulisse 1990:36). However, even if the picture story description task approaches used in these four studies have been able to help researchers to identify CSs, it has the disadvantage of being obtained in an unnatural setting. According to Poulisse: "One way to achieve a fair degree or naturalness is to select familiar topics, or preferably, to allow the subjects to determine the topic of speech" (1990:81). It is difficult to detect truly natural speech situations in experimental situations because of what Labov (1972) calls the observer's paradox[3]. Hence this notion, to get as close as possible we can try to find situations that give the students room to behave as naturally as possible.

Poulisse (1990:81) argues that in a natural task there are no restrictions, and in these situations speakers are free to solve or avoid communicative problems in order to reach the goal. Moreover we don't even know if CSs are something that the individual develops just for second language acquisition or if strategies are something the individual already has in his L1.

Some researchers acknowledge CSs as primarily a study of language use, not learning, and that is why CSs have been studied in connection with L2 learners. Recent research acknowledges the existence of similar use of strategic behavior in both L1 and L2. A study that indicates that CSs is not only a specific L2 phenomenon is one made by Poulisse; Bongaerts and Kellerman (1990), called the Nijmegen project. This study was based on a 110,000 word corpus of learner language, where CSs were investigated. The subjects who participated in the study were 45 Dutch learners of English at three different proficiency levels. Four task were used in this experiment in order to obtain as much data as possible; task 1 which was the most controlled task was based on a concrete picture description, task 2 was an oral interview which was the most natural task, task 3 was a story retelling task based on telling a picture story, giving instructions and giving route directions, and the last task was an abstract figure description task. The main issue of the last task was to investigate whether or not the subjects transfer their L1 CSs to the L2.

The taxonomy developed by the researchers in the Nijmegen project (1990) ended up creating a new division of strategies, archistrategies, which was an attempt to create a taxonomy that only consisted of two strategies, conceptual and linguistic archistrategy. In this sense there are only two possible processes that can generate CSs:

> Learners can either manipulate the concept so that it becomes expressible
>
> through their available linguistic (or mimetic) resources, or they can
>
> manipulate the language so as to come as close as possible to expressing
>
> their original intention (Bialystok 1990).

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[3]To detect real communication in linguistic research we need to observe conversation from people in situations where they are not being systematically observed, but the only way to find available data is through systematic observation (Wardhaugh 2006:19)

The researchers behind the Nijmegen project claim that previous research fails to reflect the actual choice available for the learners. They argue that the difference between strategies lies in the properties of the words, and not in the strategies themselves; therefore the study of strategies should go beyond linguistic differences, and focus on the underlying process instead (Cook 1993:125). This theory lies behind their choice of focusing their study on only compensatory strategies, that is, how an individual copes with problems in expressing himself or herself instead of choosing an avoidance strategy when presented with a difficulty.

2.1 Compensatory strategies

Compensatory strategies can be seen as complementary research to CSs. According to Cook (2008:109) social and psychological communicative strategies are complementary ways of coping with the difficulties in communicating in a second language, but this kind of research often ends up as rather long and confusing lists. Eric Kellerman (1997) argued that these lists need be simplified and suggests that a different model of establishing CS is needed. Compensatory strategies belong to the psycholinguistic approach and favor the idea that CSs would be more plausible if the taxonomies represent the underlying processes that are going on within the learner. Compensatory strategies are divided into two basic types of strategies; conceptual archistrategies and linguistic archistrategies.

The conceptual archistrategy deals with the activity of thinking of the meaning of a word and trying to convey it in another way or as Poulisse (1990) puts it 'the conceptual archistrategy reflects a decision by the learner to compensate for missing a word by exploiting conceptual knowledge'. The conceptual archistrategy is divided into two subcategories; analytical strategy where learner tries to break up the meaning of a word into small parts, and then convey them separately: '*talk uh bird*' for '*parrot*'. The listener will be able to infer the intended meaning from the properties which have been mentioned, the following example from Poulisse (1990:60):

> S: ja, its green and uh, you usually uh, eat it with uh potatoes
>
> I: mm
>
> S: erm 2
>
> I: that is a vegetable?
>
> S: yes, uh ja erm, Popeye uh eats it uh
>
> I: <laughs> oh ja
>
> S: erm
>
> I: ja, I know what you mean now, spinach ja
>
> S: oh ja, spinach ja

The second subcategory which is the holistic strategy, where the learner thinks of the missing word as a whole part instead of dividing the word into small parts, and tries to use the closest possible word, for example using '*table*' to explain '*desk*'. Poulisse (1990:61) says that the speaker who adopts a holistic strategy can refer to a word by using a related concept, which can be a subordinate or a subordinate to the intended word. The holistic strategy is similar to the achievement strategy '*generalization*' used by Færch and Kasper (1983), meaning that a learner uses a more general term rather than a particular one.

In a linguistic archistrategy the student falls back on the language resources inside their head. The linguistic archistrategy is also divided into two subcategories; morphological creativity, which happens when learners try to make up a

word using proper endings, such as '*ironise*' for '*ironing*'. The second subcategory of the linguistic archistrategy is L1 transfer, which is the same as code-switching, meaning that learners use knowledge from their L1 in their L2. It can be argued that the disadvantage of using the psycholinguistic approach is that we can never know what is going on inside a learner in spontaneous situations.

2.2 Communication strategies

It is possible to see a number of strategies at work, and although this list of strategies is not intended to be a full list of all existing CSs, it is intended to clarify the meaning of strategies used by the students in my study. These strategies can be viewed as an attempt by the learners to get their meanings across, keep the conversation going and in some situations when there is lack in the target language. The taxonomy presented by Tarone (Tarone in Færch and Kasper 1983:62) with a few modifications will be consulted for this essay.

2.2.1   Pauses and hesitations

In situations where the students do not know how to proceed in the conversation while speaking, they can use pauses and hesitations in order to get their meaning across. Pauses and hesitations are good tools for speakers to plan what they want to say next, and how to do so. Færch and Kasper (1983:214), who are among the psycholinguistically oriented researchers, claim that certain performance features such as pauses and hesitations can be used as evidence of how planning and execution take place. Færch and Kasper (1983) distinguish between four different types of pausing: articulatory pauses which may be because of stop consonants, pauses for breathing, conventional pauses, which are necessary for interpreting an utterance, and last hesitation pauses. Hesitation pauses are the only pauses which indicate underlying speech planning. A distinction is often made between unfilled (silent) pauses and filled pauses involving non-lexical activity such as *er, erm, oh* or turn-based starters such as *well, I mean, you know, I don't know.* Pauses and hesitations are not strategies used by Tarone, however her definition of Appeal for assistance has some similarities with unfilled pauses, since using the phrases '*you know what I mean*', '*you know what I'm trying to say is*' is an indicator for the speaker to use his listeners for help to get his meaning across. However it is not always the case that a speaker uses pauses and hesitations with the intention of signaling for help.

2.2.2   Questions

Asking questions is a natural part of our conversations with other people. It is a way for us to start a conversation, keep it interesting and sometimes to change the topic. Asking questions signals that we want to retrieve some kind of information and by using this interrogative structure we preform what is called a direct speech act (Yule 2010:134). Using questions is a good way for us to link our conversations together and keep them.

2.2.3   Code-switching

Code-switching occurs when a speaker knows more than one language that is why the study of code-switching can be seen as a part of the study on bilingualism (Romaine 1989). Code switching is certainly a CS, but it is also the case that code-switching is a category of its own, outside the study of communicative strategies. Code-switching is

then used as a specific L2 feature used by bilingual learners. Investigators of code-switching have focused on identifying in what kind of situations L1 influences the L2. "It occurs when a speaker changes from one variety or language to another variety or language in accordance with situational o purely personal factors" (Ellis 1994:696).

According to Milroy and Muysken (1995:7) code-switching can occur between different turns in the conversation, and sometimes between utterances within a single turn, or with a single utterance. Situational factors that can influence learners to code-switch are depending on what kind of topic is used, how well the participants know each other and what kind of setting is used. Code-switching can be used by the speakers to fill linguistic gaps, express ethnicity, and to achieve some specific discourse aims.

According to Gardner (2009:98) code-switching belongs primarily to the study of sociolinguistics, which can be used as an approach to detect code-switching. It can be argued that only through a sociolinguistic perspective can we observe language and language use in relation to the speaker's social identity.

When a speaker starts a sentence in one language and ends the sentence in another without mixing the languages is sometimes called classic code-switching, or alternational code-switching (Muysken 2000). Muysken (2000:96) says that alteration is a very common strategy used when code-switching. In addition to alternation Muysken (2000) employs that there are two other distinct types of code-switching, viz. insertion and congruent lexicalization. Insertion is what happens when speakers chose to involve a word or a phrase, in the L2 structure. As shown in example (1).

(1)

Persian – Swedish

xob pas **falsk-an** pesa-aˆ

well then false-cop3pl boy-pl

"Well then boys are false."

<div align="right">(Naseh Lotfabbadi 2002:101, cited in Bullock & Toribio 2009:3)</div>

Another commonly used way of insertional code-switching is called *tag-switching* and this phenomenon is used primarily as a pragmatic effect, when tags and interjections from the L1 are mixed into the target language (Bullock & Toribio 2009:4). Example shown in (2)

(2)

English – Swedish

If you look at your log OXXXX XXXXXXXX likes blabla **och så ba.**

'and I was like'

<div align="right">(Example from this study - 2011 11/4)</div>

Congruent lexicalization occurs when two languages share some parts of a grammatical structure which can lead speakers to share lexical elements in either language.

The definitions of code-switching used by Muysken (2000) differs from those proposed in Tarones (1977) taxonomy on code-switching in the sense that Tarone's research is primarily based on CSs, where switching is seen as a part of CSs available for learners in interaction with each other, whereas as in Muysken (2000) code-switching is referred to situations where all cases of lexical features and grammatical items from two languages appear in one sentence.

2.2.4 Message abandonment

In Tarone's (1977) taxonomy, message abandonment is a subcategory of avoidance. There are two types of avoidance strategies, the first, topic avoidance which occurs when learners avoid talking about certain topics because the target language structure such as vocabulary is not known (Bialystok 1990:80). The second avoidance strategy, message abandonment, which is said to occur when a learner begins to talk about something, but is unable to continue and stops in mid-utterance and therefore begins a new sentence or chooses not to begin a new sentence at all. Færch and Kasper (1983) share another view on message abandonment, which is based on the idea that learners who use message abandonment as a CS do not abandon anything at all, what they do is they start over in order to get the meaning across (Færch and Kasper 1983:41). Færch and Kasper (1983) do not use the term message abandonment in their classification of Avoidance; however they divide avoidance into two different reduction strategies instead. They claim that the reason for learners to use formal reduction strategies is because they want to avoid making errors or because they want to increase their own fluency by applying this strategy.

3. Method

The reason why I chose to study spoken language in order to detect CSs was based in the idea that studying speech helps us to get closer to real communication, based on the assumption that speech is more spontaneous than writing. In this study I have tape-recorded a conversation of four upper secondary students. These students attend their first year at upper secondary school, and are at an intermediate level of English; however, what needs to be kept in mind is that the students were not at the same proficiency level. The students were given a topic to talk about and the topic was Facebook. The reason I chose Facebook as a topic was in order to keep the conversation as natural and genuine as possible. Facebook is something the students are well acquainted with, and Facebook plays a huge part in their way of communicating and interacting online. All of the students that were in my study had a Facebook account and were familiar with the features of Facebook, which made them comfortable enough to speak about it, while being recorded. I was in the same room as the students, however I did not take active part in their conversation. I told the students that I was going to listen to them communicate with each other, but I did not tell them that I was listening for CSs. The group consisted of students in the ages of 16 to 18. The parents of the students that were under-aged signed a form of consent (see Appendix 2). The conversation recorded was 12 minutes. I transcribed the recording and looked for situations where the students used communicative strategies to help each other and to keep the conversations going. There are a total of 237 utterances in the transcription, and I have given each utterance a number, followed by a letter in order to separate the subjects from each other.

4. Result and discussion

The result below is based on a conversation between four upper-secondary school students, recording was made on 11/4-2011 with the purpose of finding out how the subjects solve communicative problems, help each other and keep the conversation going. The result is followed by a discussion of the findings.

4.1 Pauses and hesitation

The speakers used both unfilled and filled pauses in order to avoid non-fluency situations, to buy themselves some time to think about what to say next, and in some situations used to signal for help from the other students.

(1)

> 9.O: So, how often are you logged into the Facebook?
>
> 10.J: Once every two week
>
> [Laughter]
>
> 11.O: Okay, that's alright, er and you two?
>
> 12.T: Er [Pause] what I use Facebook, why?
>
> 13.O: How often?
>
> 14.T: How, how often? Er I don't know

In this example we can see that there are both unfilled, filled hesitation pauses and articulatory pause. In utterance (9) speaker 'O' asks the rest of the students' a question, whereby in utterance (12) subject 'T' seems to have forgotten the questions and begins by using a filled pause '*er*' followed by an unfilled (silent) pause '[Pause]'. Subject 'T' encounters a problem which seems to be the reason for hesitating, which indicates to the other students that she needs some help to answer the question. In utterance (14) 'T' answers the question by using both non-lexical activity '*er*' and a turn-based starter '*I don't know*', however not with the intention of appealing for assistance, it is more likely that this is done in order to think even further before answering.

(2)

> 15.M: Always when you are boring
>
> 16.T: Yeah, always yeah, cause I'm logged In on my phone so it would "pling" when something's happening
>
> [Laughter]
>
> 17.T: Yeah so always. You?

In utterance (15) subject 'M' interprets 'T' hesitation in utterance (14) as need for help, and answers the question for speaker 'T', guessing 'T's answer which leads to speaker 'T' continuing answering on her own in utterance (16).

4.2 Questions

The students used both yes/no questions, but also in situations where something was not understood or unclear. In total, 24 questions were asked during the recording. Student "J" was the one taking the initiative to ask most of the questions involving Facebook. "J" leads the conversation as shown in example (1):

(1)

> 1. J: Do you guys use Facebook?
>
> 2. T, M: Yes
>
> 3. O: Yes I do
>
> 4. T: Yeah, why do you use it?

Example (1) shows the beginning of the conversation with "J" taking the initiative and starting the conversation by asking a basic question concerning the use of his fellow students' Facebook use. This short passage (2) follows the answers followed by another question.

 (2)

> 9. O: So, how often are you logged in to the Facebook?
>
> 10. J: Once every two week
>
> [Laughter]
>
> 11. O: Okay, that's alright, eh and you two?

While observing the conversations among the students I was able to detect that in order to keep the conversation going the students kept asking each other questions about the different topics when it came to Facebook. It is evident that the students listened to each other and gave feedback, built on each other sentences and helped each other in situations where the current speaker got stuck, by asking questions and by doing so developing the conversation even further. This basic strategy of asking questions is probably a strategy the students have from their L1.

4.3 Code-switching

The students did not use any form of literal translation, nor did they use code-switching in situations where it would have been more appropriate to make themselves understood, as in utterance (103):

> 103.M: And you can write something who is in not mean but the other people think it's anything

One interpretation of this might be that even if these students are second language learners of English, they do not feel they need to use words and phrases from their L1 in order to make themselves understood. Which could indicate that English as a language is very familiar to them. Out of 237 utterances, 7 of these consisted of some form of code-switching.

Examples of code-switching with a single word

> 48.O: And you know when I'm really bored you know then it's can be like [??] snäll häst that pops up
>
> 200.O: So you know 'oh my god you have to see this"! Klick and then if you look at your
>
> 202.O: If you look at your log <Oxxxx xxxxx> likes blabla och så bah
>
> 230.T: Där, there right. Or there, perhaps.

In utterances (48), (200), (202) and (230) we can see examples of code-switching. The students chose to use a Swedish word, un-translated, into the L2 structure. In utterance (48) the student is code-switching towards the end of the sentence. 'O' is describing a situation in which something is boring on Facebook, leading him to post '*snäll häst*' on his Facebook. 'O' uses the Swedish word '*snäll häst*', pronounced '*snel hest*', meaning '*a nice horse*' which is an expression that has become popular to use among teenagers,

both in speaking and in writing, mostly on the internet. The expression comes from a Swedish television program for children called Hipp Hipp[4]. 'O' uses '*snäll häst*' as a tag, there is no specific or particular meaning to the utterance, except that it is only used as an expression. The reason 'O' uses '*snäll häst*' in utterance (48) is most likely because there is no linguistic equivalent to this in English, and if 'O' was to say this in English it would not have the same meaning. Utterance (202) has the same function as utterance (48) '*och så bah*' is a Swedish expression resembling '*and I was like*' in English. Both utterance (48) and (202) are examples of tag-switching. In utterance (230), 'T' starts the sentence with a single Swedish word, '*där*' which means '*there*' in English. 'T' corrects herself quickly, after pronouncing '*där*' and continues the sentence in English.

 Examples of code-switching in whole sentences:

> 224.J: So I think we are done here
>
> [Laughter]
>
> 225.J: Tror inte du ska röra den där då måste vi göra om allt
>
> 226.T: Så, bah nu rör vi allt
>
> 227.O: Should we pause it or something
>
> 228.T: Yeah
>
> 229.J: Den lyser
>
> [Laughter]
>
> 230.T: Där, there right. Or there, perhaps
>
> [Pause]
>
> 231.M: Everything is gone
>
> 232.T: Så!
>
> 233.T: No!
>
> 234.O: No!
>
> 235.O: Still ticking still ticking
>
> 237.T: Still ticking

These are the last 12 utterances in the recording and the conversation in this part of the recording is about turning off the recording device. We can observe how the students throughout this part of the conversation switch back and forth from the target language to their L1 while trying to figure out how to turn off the recording device without deleting the whole recording.

In utterance (224) 'J' is starting by speaking in his L2 and claiming that he thinks they are done with the recording, whereby he code-switches and starts the new utterance (225) in Swedish, as if he is no longer being recorded. Following the conversation, we can observe how 'T' applies switching naturally without disturbing the fluency. If 'T' is aware, or not aware of what she is doing is not easy to tell, however one can claim that the code-switching used during the end of the recording was simply because the students felt comfortable enough to switch to Swedish and stepping out of the 'world of being recorded'.

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[4]<http://svt.se/2.145320/hipp_hipp> [Accessed on 27 may 2011]

4.4 Message Abandonment

The avoidance strategy presented in this study indicates that the students prefer to use message abandonment rather than topic avoidance. Message abandonment is shown in those utterances where the students begin speaking but end their utterance half way without any further explanation. In utterance (46), 'O' is trying to explain something he usually writes on Facebook, but 'O' never gets to the point of explaining what he actually is writing. A reason for this can be that 'O' usually writes in Swedish on his Facebook, therefore the explanation in English would not have been the same.

> 46.O: Well I write something on Facebook its..
>
> 47.M: You do it on others Facebook
>
> [Laughter]
>
> 47.O: Yeah face rape!

'O' leaves the intended meaning, which is followed by utterance (47) where 'M' says that 'O' writes on others Facebook, whereby in utterance (47) 'O' has left his previous utterance unanswered, and replies on 'M' statement. There is a similar situation in utterance (58) as in utterance (46). 'O' is trying to explain the reason for being on Facebook during class, and stops before he finishes his sentence, then in utterance (59) 'M' jumps in and guesses what 'O' was trying to say, 'M' is doing this because of their mutual knowledge about Facebook. In utterance (60), 'O' continues where he left off, agreeing with what 'M' says and finishes off by saying that when something is boring during a lesson there is no reason for listening so you might as well log onto Facebook.

> 58.O: Perhaps but often when you're logged into Facebook your class then you
>
> 59.M: You have nothing to do
>
> 60.O: Exact it's something that is you know [Pause] so boring that you can't even hear it anyway you know

In utterances (78) and (95), 'T' ends both of these utterances with 'like', as if she is about to explain something but does not actually do it. In utterance (78), 'T' says that it is not important having a relationship showing on Facebook, and then she tries to compare that with something by ending the sentence with 'it's not like', but she never finishes.

> 78.T: No, but I don't think it's important it's not like..

A similar situation can be seen in utterances (95-98), where we have two utterances with message abandonment (95 and 96), both ending in '*like*', without any further explanation or information added. The mutual knowledge they share allows them to understand each other without having to give any further explanation. Even if 'M' only says '*and then people take it like*', 'T' understands what she is trying to say is that people can take it the wrong way if you don't want to show your relationship status on Facebook.

> 95.T: Cause you write something you don't really mean it's like
>
> 96.O: [??]
>
> 97.M: And then people take it like

98.T: Yeah

In utterance (200), 'O' uses message abandonment and ends the sentence in mid-utterance, however in this case 'O' comes back to his message and finishes after 'T's utterance in (201). This could support the idea from Færch and Kasper (1983), that avoidance does not have to be interpreted as only abandonment; it could also be seen as a way for speakers to simply change their communicative goal in order to get the meaning across.

200.O: So you know 'oh my god you have to see this"! Klick and then if you look at your..

201.T: And?

202.O: If you look at your log <Oxxxx xxxxx> likes blabla och så bah.

In utterance (211) 'J' asks the others how they think they are perceived on Facebook, whereby 'T' in utterance (212) does not understand the word 'perceived' and that is when 'O' in utterance (213) tries to describe the word to 'T'. 'O' starts the sentence with 'yeah Facebook' and then leaves that trail of thought and start over again by explaining what 'perceived means'. Here we have another case of not just abandoning but rethinking an utterance instead.

211.J: How do you think you are perceived on Facebook? [Pronounced several times]

212.T: Perceived?

213.O: Yeah Facebook . . .to what people think of you on Facebook I think.

5. Conclusion

In this essay I have looked at what kind of communicative strategies a group of four upper secondary students use in interaction with each other. The communicative strategies I have looked at were pauses and hesitation, questions, code-switching and message abandonment. The reliability of this conclusion is limited since only 237 utterances were collected and the participants in my study consisted of only four students. One needs to keep in mind that this is a localized case study, and by no means an explanation of how L2 students in general use communicative strategies. My intention was to see how the students used these strategies to keep the conversation going and in order to help each other in situations where problems in communication occurred. The students used questions frequently to help each other and to keep the conversation going. A problem in the communication was shown when the speakers used pauses and hesitations, which to the listeners indicated that help was needed, no matter if that was the reason for pausing and hesitating. In situations where the speakers tried to solve the problems themselves they preferred to use code-switching and message abandonment. Code-switching was used in order to bring an effect to an utterance, and not because of lacking knowledge in their L2. Message abandonment is not only used to leave an intended goal, it is also used as an alternative way to retrieve the intended message and start over again. My results suggest that even though there are several indications where the students lack sufficient resources in their L2, they still do not use the CSs that most researchers have found to be present in L2 learners' use of CSs. The results also suggest that the conversation is going on smoothly because of the fact that these students all know each other and share a mutual knowledge when it comes to Facebook. The students are relying on each other back and forth during the whole conversation which is an important aspect of communicating. If we set aside the fact that the research of CSs is far from complete, we can still use the knowledge on CSs to help both teachers and learners, strategies they can use as a way to improve L2 learning and their own awareness of communicative competence they have at their disposal. A suggestion for further research could be the study of how Swedish L2 learners of English use communicative strategies depending on their proficiency in English. It remains for further research to show how the development of communicative strategies for Swedish L2 learners of English is manifested since English has become a wide known language in Sweden and many students are well acquainted with English even before they start school.

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APPENDIX 1 - Transcription

Code-Switching
Questions
Message abandonment
Pauses/Hesitation

1.J: Do you guys use Facebook?

2.T, M: Yes

3.O: Yes I do

4.T: Yeah, why do you use it?

5.J: I don't

6.[Laughter]

7.J: Right, some friends talked me into getting..

8.T: Aha okay

9.O: So, how often are you logged in to the Facebook?

10.J: Once every two week

[Laughter]

11.O: Okay, that's alright, and you two?

12.T: Er [Pause] what I use Facebook? Why?

13.O: How often

14.T: How, how often? Er I don't know

15.M: Always when you are boring

16.T: Yeah, always yeah, cause I'm logged In on my phone so it would "pling" when something's happening

[Laughter]

17.T: Yeah so always. You?

18.M: Er sometimes, when I have boring

19.T: Yeah

20.M: Most of the time when you are home

21.T: Yeah and in school you too

22.M: And you think OH

23.M: It can't have happened something on Facebook

24.T: Yeah and you see

25.M: Oh

26.T: And you're like refreshing

[Laughter]

27.M: Yeah

28.T: Yeah

[Pause]

29.J: Do you share private information on Facebook?

30.T: Yeah, I do, oh no maybe not

31.J: Like what?

32.M: Not so much

33.T: No, no not so much but

34.M: But

35.O: More like [??]

36.T: Maybe like relationships and such

37.M: But not like

38.T: I do

39.M: Some people do like er I gonna go to the store now and do dinner after that

40.T: No, no, not

41.M: I don't

42.M: Write what they've done

43.T: I don't write anything so

44.M: Not me either I just look

[Laughter]

45.M: What other people do

46.O: Well I write something on Facebook its

47.M: You do it on others Facebook

[Laughter]

47.O: Yeah face rape!

[Laughter]

48.O: And you know when I'm really bored you know then it's can be like [??] snäll häst that pops up so

49.T: Yeah but not on your own Facebook?

50.O: No, no it's much more doing it on others Facebook. See all the comment and reactions on [??]

51.J: How much time do you spend on Facebook? We already answered that

52.T: Yeah

53.O: Sort of

[Pause]

54.J: Er does the time you spend on Facebook prevent you from doing your best in school?

55.T: Yeah

56.O: Well

57.T: I think so,

58.O: Perhaps but often when you're logged into Facebook your class then you

59.M: You have nothing to do

60.O: Exact it's something that is you know [Pause] so boring that you can't even hear it anyway you know

61.M: And if you don't are on Facebook you are somewhere else on internet so and something else

62.T: Yeah

63.M: Yeah so

64.T: Yeah maybe

65.J: Relations ship status, is it important?

66.T: I don't think it's important

67.M: No

68.T: But it's like if the, if the other person thinks [Pause] wants it or something then I'm okay with it

69.O: Something

70.M: If they send a 'do you want to be '

71.T: A request or something

72.M: Yeah

73.M: You just need to say yes

[Laughter]

74.T: And I'm like no, DENY

[Laughter]

75.T: And he say "AH why we don't have relationship"?

76.O: Why?

77.M: You don't like me

[Laughter]

78.T: No, but I don't think it's important it's not like

79.M: We're not [??]. We don't talked on Facebook

80.O: Have you?

81.T: I don't care about it

82.O: Have you watched that South Park episode when there about Facebook?

83.M, T: No

84.J: You have no friends

85.O: What?

86.J: The episode is called you have no friends

87.O: You're watching it?

88.J: Yeah

89.O: Yeah and you know its one of the guys in South Park that's [Pause] he's recently got a Facebook page from his friend, friends, he don't really want it. So you know all his real friends are sending lots of friend requests. You know when he's ignoring that everybody hates him in real life. "WHY HAVENT YOU REPLYED ON MY friend request on Facebook, YOU HATE ME AH"! So well that could actually happen in real life sort of

90.T: Yeah it could

91.O: You know so

92.T: It's like sometimes it's too serious on Facebook

93.O: Yeah

94.M: Yeah

95.T: Cause you write something you don't really mean it's like

96.O: [??]

97.M: And then people take it like

98.T: Yeah

99.M: Oh my god [Pause], no

100.T: Yeah and

101.M: It can be so wrong

102.T: It's too much

103.M: And you can write something who is in not mean but the other people think it's anything

104.T: Yeah

105.M: But you don't mean it that way. Can be so wrong

106.T: Yeah [Pause], it's true

107.J: So friend requests ignoring friend requests, have you ever ignored a friend requests?

108.O: Yeah I HAVE!

109.T: Yeah

110.O: Indeed

111.T: Indeed

112.O: Yes indeed

113.T: You're proud of it

114.O: Indeed

115.O: Yeah well for an example I have deny my sister

116.M: No!

117.T: Why?

118.O: Because I don't want her to find out everything I'm doing on Facebook and what's going on and so on

119.T: But you do with your mother Facebook so she don't know

120.T: So you want some privacy?

121.O: Yeah

122.T: That she doesn't know about

[Pause]

123.O: Yes. Yes she can be

124.M: Mean

125.O: Mean yeah

126.M: Say it to parents

127.O: Pain in the ass

128.O: Yeah they know

129.T: But I hate when random people send requests

130.M: Yeah

131.T: But I just deny it when

132.M: You get angry after them because you don't know them and then them don't know you and

133.T: Yeah

134.M: Hello

135.T: And sometimes it's like people at school that you have seen

136.M: Yeah but you never see say hello to you

137.T: No never and you don't even know their friends or anything

138.M: And they just "Do you wanna be friends with me"?

139.O: Yeah

140.T: So you don't really want to deny it but still you don't want to be invited their friend on Facebook

141.M: You can mean when you

142.T: Why why should you?

143.T: But so if you deny it they could think that

144.O: Why do you deny me?

145.M: Bitch

146.O: Yeah but I got eh a friends neighbor [Pause] he trying to be my friend on Facebook but thou he's about ten

147.M: No!

148.O: You know so I just no, no

149.M: No that's horrible

150.O: That's you know I don't actually press the button deny [??]

151.T: No

152.O: Just so they won't get sad

153.T: So you still have it there

154.O: Yeah

155.T: Yeah but it's if you deny it it's the same as if you just ignore clicking

156.M: I have friend with my mother's cousin's child on Facebook and always when he is with his friends he is write to me "hi beauty what are you doing"? And just 'OH GO AWAY '!

157.O: Go away go away

158.M: Get off me

159.O: Yeah oh well interesting thing I [Pause] all my friends on Facebook its always them who send me the friends request. I have never send a friend request to anyone because it's you know Im thinking [Pause]if it is some people who that I don't know that really well then you know thinking maybe then they hmm think well what a fucking pain in the ass this guy so I don't actually

160.M: You send one to me

161.O: Did I?

162.M: Dah, yeah

163.J: Uuuuuuh

164.T: Uuuuh [??]

165.O: Uuh

166.M: Uuuh

167.O: Uuh

[Laughter]

168.O: Good English

[Laughter]

[Pause]

169.M: Little liar

[Laughter]

170.J: Have you ever posted something you have regretted later?

[Pause]

180.T: I don't know

181.O: Er maybe

182.T: Probably maybe sometimes

183.M: But you have forget it

184.O: Er perhaps commentary or something like that [Pause] but I don't think I ever posted something wrong

185.T: Oh once there was like a girl who had a boyfriend for like a year or something and she broke up or they broke up and she was really sad and everyone was commenting like horrors and everything

186.M: No!

187.T: I accidently pushed like, and I was like NOOOOO!

[Laughter]

188.O: DISLIKE DISLIKE!

189.T: So I had to, cause if I dislike it she would still get notice

190.O: Yeah So

191.T: And I wrote comment like

192.O: TXXX likes, TXXX dislikes

193.T: I wrote her a message

194.J: Yeah

195.M: No

196.O: Well that's kind of sucks too [Pause]when often when there are people who are posting you know like links and as quick as you press the link to see what it is you suddenly like it on Facebook you know it does it that automatically

197.M: That you say think

198.T: Does it?

199.O: Yeah

200.O: So you know 'OH MY GOD YOU HAVE TO SEE THIS"! Klick and then if you look at your

201.T: And

202.O: If you look at your log OXXXX XXXXXXXX likes blabla och så bah

203.O: And you can't dislike that you you can like that you like something

204.O: Yeah and you fucking hate it

205.T: Oh

206.O: So there are some shorts to Facebook, Facebook [??]

207.T: Yeah I think it's too much Facebook really

208.M: Yeah

209.T: Sometimes I wanna [Pause] yeah quit my

210.O: But that's really hard to do

211.J: How do you think you are perceived on Facebook? [Pronounced several times]

212.T: Perceived?

213.O: Yeah Facebook.. to what people think of you on Facebook I think

214.T: Yeah, I think

215.O: Well

216.T: I don't know don't think I'm too eh active on Facebook so I don't think it's very much

217.M: I think people think of me that 'oh boring' cause I never write something never lay out a picture or something like that

[Pause]

218.T: I don't know [Pause] it's just funny if you

219.M: Look at others

220.T: Yeah read others

[Pause]

221.O: Stuff?

222.T: Stuff!

223.M: Stuff!

225.J: Tror inte du ska röra den där då måste vi göra om allt

226.T: Så, bah nu rör vi allt

227.O: Should we pause it or something

228.T: Yeah

229.J: Den lyser

[Laughter]

230.T: Där, there right. Or there, perhaps

[Pause]

231.M: Everything is gone

232.T: Så!

233.T: No!

234.O: No!

235.O: Still ticking still ticking

237.T: Still ticking

APPENDIX 2 – Form of consent

Godkännande för minderårig elev
- Anonym inspelning

Hej! Mitt namn är Nina Begovic och jag behöver er hjälp! Nu är det så att jag studerar på Högskolan i Gävle. Just nu arbetar jag med min C-uppsats i Engelska, som delvis går ut på att spela in elever när de pratar och löser problem på Engelska.

Det inspelade materialet kommer inte att användas av någon annan än mig, och är helt anonymt. Inspelningen är enbart till för att hjälpa mig i min C-uppsats och som jag nämnde ovan, för att se hur elever pratar och löser problem på Engelska.

Inspelningen kommer att gå till så att jag samlar in en liten grupp elever, max 4. Eleverna ska sedan få ett ämne att prata om, och det är detta samtal som spelas in.

Elevens namn:

Jag/Vi godkänner inspelning:

Mail:_____

Mobil:_____

Underskrift:_____