

## Learner communication strategies in spoken Norwegian L2 English

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This paper presents the first exploration of the Norwegian subcorpus of the Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage (LINDSEI), a corpus of oral English produced by advanced learners with different L1 backgrounds. Still under compilation, this subcorpus will mirror the other LINDSEI subcorpora in containing 50 interviews divided according to three tasks: set topic, general discussion, and picture description. The aim of this paper is to examine and shed new light on some aspects of the linguistic and strategic competence of Norwegian advanced learners' English, by identifying and analyzing learner communication strategies in their oral English. Our main research questions are:

- What types of communication strategies are utilized by the Norwegian learners?
- To what extent and in which contexts are such strategies used?

Our study is primarily corpus-driven, i.e. the corpus serves as our empirical basis, and our conclusions are made on the basis of corpus observations, in this case a corpus of individual recorded conversations between Norwegian college students and a native speaker (interviews). We make the prior assumptions that a common goal of these speakers is communication, and that meaning is constructed and negotiated between the two participants in the conversation. For our analysis, we adopt a concept that is widely recognized in the field of language acquisition (Takač 2008: 26-57), viz. that of *learner communication strategies*, i.e. ways in which learners overcome or compensate for limitations in their linguistic resources when engaging in L2 interaction.

While studies of communication strategies are often based on experimental data and/or learners' individual judgements (Poulisse 1993: 163-167), a corpus-based study may take an inventory of such strategies and their linguistic (or extralinguistic) encoding as its point of departure. This study follows a recursive model, using an existing taxonomy of communication strategies as its starting point, and then modifying it based on the empirical evidence revealed in the corpus. Various such taxonomies exist (e.g. Tarone 1978; Færch and Kasper 1983; Bialystok 1990; Poulisse 1993); in our initial analysis we will apply Tyrone's (1978) typology (presented in Saville-Troike 2006: 169):

1. Avoidance
  - a. Topic avoidance
  - b. Message abandonment
2. Paraphrase

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- a. Approximation
- b. Word coinage
- c. Circumlocution
3. Conscious transfer
  - a. Literal translation
  - b. Language switch
4. Appeal for assistance
5. Mime

The first 17 interviews, recorded in 2010 and amounting to 263 minutes of recorded conversation, provide the primary material for the investigation. They are supplemented by socio-linguistic background data collected about each speaker. As the corpus is still being transcribed, results from our study are not yet available. The following example, however, serves as an illustration of the phenomenon under investigation. Here, the L2 speaker, labelled <B>, simultaneously employs two compensation strategies – “paraphrasing” and “appeal for assistance” - while discussing a type of musical instrument for which she lacks the English word:

<B> and (em) (eh) . I remember all the: I don't know the: English word but the: adult m= (eh) wind band I think it's wind band or wind ensemble or something like that but I n= I'm not I (eh) I haven't ever figured it out <overlap /> because </B>  
<A> (mhm) </A>  
<B> it's just . it you: google it you always get the: Am= . the: American school bands you never her= he= hear anything about the ad= adult ones what they do </B>  
<A> I don't know I'm not a music <overlap /> person . so </A>  
<B> <overlap /> (mm) </B>  
<A> you're asking the wrong <begin laughter> person if you're looking for an answer <end laughter> </A>

The student begins by admitting a gap in her lexicon (*I don't know the English word but...*). She then offers various approximations of the target lexis (*...the adult m= (eh) wind band I think it's wind band or wind ensemble or something like that but...*), whereupon she again states that she lacks the necessary term (*...I n= I'm not I (eh) I haven't ever figured it out*). Her uncertainty also generates disfluencies in the form of abandonment (*m=*), repetition (*I n= I'm not I (eh) I*) and overt markers of hesitancy (*eh*). The response of the interviewer, <A>, indicates that the student's acknowledgments of a lexical gap has been interpreted as implicit appeals for assistance (*I don't know I'm not a music person...so you're asking the wrong person if you're looking for an answer*).

## References

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