

# Study on Chinese Communication Strategies Use of Primary and Secondary Oversea Students

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**Abstract.** The communication strategies study of second language learners is based on the strategies that would affect learners' learning and using of target languages so as to help language learners fully understand and effectively regulate their own behavior and activities on the learning and using of target language. In this paper, the writer has investigated and discussed the Chinese communicative strategies using situation of 34 primary and secondary overseas students in Ningxia University, and has got the result that the Chinese level, the learning of communication strategies, the degree of communication difficulty and psychological factors would influence students to choose right communicative strategy. In addition, this paper has put detailed explanation for the primary and secondary Chinese teaching methods as a foreign language from the following aspects: the amount of vocabulary input, communication strategies training, teaching environment and teaching content as well as the quality of language output in order to establish the best Chinese teaching methods as a foreign language.

## Introduction

Based on research of the target language communication strategies that affect learners' learning and using results, the communication strategy study is an indispensable part for second language acquisition research. The fruits of it have a crucial significance in how to properly treat communicative strategies in foreign language teaching, how to help second language learners to master the target language in the right direction. Through interviews and a classification of errors in homework, this paper has analyzed the current using situation and characteristics of the 34 primary and secondary overseas students' communication strategies, and has got the reasons for why the primary and secondary overseas students choose different communication strategies, so as to provide a theoretical basis for the teaching and learning of foreign languages in school.

## Communication strategies of second language acquisition theory

What is the communication strategy? Some people think that there are clear boundaries between learning strategies and communication strategies in second language acquisition theory, but the other people hold that these have no difference, as if you want to give a definition to communication strategies you have to think about it is proposed for what. In 1972, the American linguist Selinker firstly proposed the concept of communication strategies to interpret language learners the main course of inter language. Inter language refers to the so-called transitional language between the mother tongue and the target language, building up by second language learners. It is in the constantly evolving process, and gradually close to the target language. In his discourse he proposed that there are five stages in inter language development: language migration; generalization of the target language rules; training migration; second language learning strategies; second language communication strategies, and these five interrelated stages play a role in the generation of inter languages. So for Selinker, it seems that it is unnecessary to make a clear distinction between learning and communication strategies. Learning strategy is not the only way for learners to get knowledge of the target language, and communication strategies can help learners acquire both knowledge of the language and complete the whole communication process with others. Therefore, communication strategy is an important factor to study learners' learning and communication process. Different definitions of communication strategies lead to different categories, among which the most representative one is Tarone communication strategies

classification method. According the classification of discourse functions, he divides communication strategy into: (1) paraphrase: approximation, circuitous, coinage ; (2) borrow: native language literal translation, language translation; (3) evasion: topic evasion, content evasion; (4) assistance: question, inquire; (5) sign language (body language); (6) imitation. This paper will analyze survey results according to Tarone communication strategy classification.

### **Characteristics of primary and secondary overseas students communication strategy**

Based on the analysis of errors in homework and interviews, we found that both primary and secondary Chinese level students use extensive communication strategy, and primary level students use it more than secondary students.

Firstly, no matter the communication object is Chinese or foreigners, primary level students commonly use body language to aid communication in order to compensate for lack of Chinese grammar and vocabulary as long as it is difficult to express. Body language exists as the common language on earth, and helps the primary Chinese learners to complete communication processes with different people. For example, in addition to the use of common teaching aids, teachers often use body language in the classroom teaching as an auxiliary tool to help beginners comprehend teaching content better, and students will also use body language to communicate with the teacher. Secondly, the primary level students will often try to continue the topics that can not go on by paraphrasing, for example, paraphrase “dorm” by “room you live in school” and “yester year” instead of “last year” to create new words. Some people even use code-switching method to use his mother tongue and Chinese together, or directly translate his mother tongue into Chinese without considering Chinese grammar rules, and expect listeners can guess what they are trying to convey according to the sporadic vocabularies. In addition, there are some junior level students often choosing to avoid or transfer the topic to continue communication, which is the most likely method beginners would use when there are errors occurring in communication. This kind of evasion includes the evasion of topic as well as the evasion of some sentences, words, maybe even voices, for example, the primary Chinese learners among overseas students often consciously omit retroflex voice. Assistance strategy is another common communication strategy for primary students, but it is often reflected in actual classroom teaching, as when there are communication barriers, most students would turn to their dictionaries, teachers and other students for help. They would ask both sides of communication to repeat their discourse to let listeners guess what they are going to express, sometimes depending on the identity of living and learning environment and the acquaintance between both sides, to maintain communications with other students speaking different native languages smooth.

### **Cause analysis of the primary and secondary overseas students’ different communication strategies**

(1) Differences in Chinese proficiency. Chinese ability is an important factor directly influencing the selection and use of communication strategies. Among the 34 interviewed students from Ningxia University, there is a total of 10 primary students and 24 secondary overseas students. All of the students have reached a consensus that the level of language influences their choice of communication strategies. While students with poor language skill tend to rely more on strategies as evasion, assistance, body language, borrow and the like. Strategies frequently and widely used by these students in the course of conversation are as follows: giving up the topic, changing the subject, using individual words rather than the whole sentences, and giving irrelevant answers, etc. With the improvement of the Chinese proficiency, students with higher levels of language significantly reduce the utilization of these strategies. Secondary overseas students are inclined to use the Chinese-based communication strategies, and rely more on means of paraphrasing and imitation.

(2.) Differences in the skills of communication strategies. Secondary students, after a year of learning, are able to sum up the experience and methods of communication strategies during the process of communicating with other students. These experience and methods, in return, facilitate

the mastery of knowledge and skills of communication strategies. Although there is still much room to improve, secondary students have already mastered much of knowledge and skills of communication strategies when compared with primary students. In this sense, secondary students, with these communication strategies, are supposed to finish tasks expertly.

(3.) Differences in complexity of Communicative topics. In the course of communication, whether it is for the primary or secondary students, due to the wide range of communication topics, multifarious communication strategies will be used with a high frequency. In face of an easy topic, students at different levels are able to hold all the cards; However, in face of a tough topic, there is a big gap in terms of their application and control of Chinese. Under the pressure of communication topics, multifarious communication strategies will be used with a high frequency for all students. Nevertheless, compared with secondary students, the primary students tend to use more communication strategies frequently, and this kind of communication depend more on the hearer's communicative competence. If the hearer comes from Chinese-related countries, then the process would be more successful. Otherwise, it is difficult to continue the communication. Secondary students' choice of communication strategies undergoes significant changes when they faced with more difficult topics. As noted above, secondary students are inclined to use the Chinese-based communication strategies, and rely more on means of paraphrasing and imitation. In this sense, secondary overseas students more mature in the selection of strategies.

### **Enlightenment for foreign language teaching**

Tarone believes that the main discourse function of communicative strategy is to ensure communication carrying out smoothly. Even if the learner cannot use certain words or structures needed, they will be exposed to other words and structures, so all communication strategies can play a role in the improvement of the language skills. In other words, communication strategies can not only help learners to participate and maintain communication, but also can improve the level of Chinese and improve the quality of communication.

(1)Expand vocabulary. From the perspective of the attributes and characteristics, as a last resort, communication strategy, designed to help accomplish the communication, refers to method for language users with insufficient language skills. That is, if communicators have a good command of the language used and the hearer are familiar with the social culture, then it is not necessary to use communication strategies, therefore, language skills have great impacts on the application of communication strategies. In the course of teaching, teachers should create more opportunities for primary students to practice, in hopes of urging students to achieve the degree of "knowing" every word. In other words, students are able to recognize the written and oral forms of language and recall them at any time, to link the appropriate objects or concepts together with a proper grammatical form, to develop a clear pronunciation and correct writing skill, and to realize the original meaning and extended meaning of a word. Overall, a smooth communication can be achieved on the basis of some Chinese skills.

(2). Improvement in the teaching environment and contents. Foreign language teaching has been adhering to a principle of succinctly and training, which is required to be established in a positive relaxed environment to allow students to confidently face every oral practices. However, often there are some teachers, who attach much importance to the accuracy, correcting error frequently, interfering with the ideas and dampening the enthusiasm of students in the communication. Therefore, when primary students encounter communication barriers, they will often give up and end the communication. All we need is to harbor a tolerant attitude to create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, enabling students to speak out freely without any mental blocks. With a consideration of the requirements of interactive communication, teachers are expected to design more communicative tasks, create more situational dialogue closely related with lives and experiences of students, and encourage students to participate in actively. In this case, students can pay more attention to the correctness of Chinese in the practices. When talking with secondary students, most of them can communicate with teachers and classmates smoothly. However, there are many difficulties in the communication with Chinese people. For this problem,

the most effective approach is to give students more opportunities to practice outside the classroom, enabling them to improve themselves step by step in a real language environment. In this process, students can not only be able to improve Chinese, and can also learn more communicative strategies by imitating others.

(3)Development and application of Communication Strategies. Teaching Chinese should neither totally dependent on communication strategies to improve students' communicative ability, nor completely exclude the positive role of communication strategies. In a way, the fluency of Chinese communication of a learner and communicative strategies are complementary to each other, reflecting the level of communicative skills. In the course of communication, whether teachers or students, whether Chinese or foreigners, all unconsciously use the communication strategies hiding in our daily lives. So teachers, in actual language teaching, should consciously train students' application skills of communication strategies to help students refine a variety of communication strategies in many learning strategies, emphasizing the importance of communication strategies on the basis of the improvements in Chinese. By doing so, Chinese learners could not only understand connotations of communication strategies, but also get an idea of how to use these strategies. This strategy is particularly important for the beginners, enabling them to use strategies to solve difficulties in the communication. For secondary students with a higher level of Chinese, they perform more mature in the selection of communication skills. They do not need to use a variety of communication strategies. However, they need to learn how to use these strategies in a more appropriate way, and integrate themselves in the real communication of the target language.

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