CHAPTER III

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE ESL CONTEXT

1. INTRODUCTION

The discussion in the previous chapter, of an appropriate model of English for an ESL context, concluded with recognition of modes of communication in English by which non-native speakers express constructs and patterns of interaction integral to their culture. This chapter relates the model of English in an ESL context to the notion of communicative competence. The chapter begins with a review of the notion of communicative competence, including the linguistic, sociolinguistic, interactionist and ethnographic perspectives. The chapter proceeds to redefine communicative competence in the ESL context, emphasising interaction and the ethnography of communication. It is suggested that the notion of strategic competence, which is drawn from the extended notion of communicative competence presented by Canale and Swain (1980), is central to the use of English in an ESL context. The emphasis on appropriacy rather than accuracy, on selectivity, and on the sociocultural and interactive aspects of communicative competence is related to the features of communication strategy that are highlighted

later in the study. Finally, communicative competence is related to the teaching-learning context; it is suggested that the interactionist perspective is central to language learning, since it provides opportunities for the development of strategic competence.

2. THE NOTION OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

2.1 The Linguistic Perspective

Different views of language are related to shifts in priorities with reference to the notion of communicative competence. One of the earliest views was that of the linguist. The focus of Chomsky's (1965) linguistic theory is the "ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community" (p. 3). Chomsky distinguishes between idealised language, which is independent of the sociocultural dimension, and the actual use of language which, according to him, is "degenerate in quality" (p. 31). He calls the former "competence" (the knowledge of the underlying system behind language), and the latter "performance" (actual use, the imperfect manifestation of the underlying system).[1] The core of Chomsky's theory is the distinction between ideal grammaticality and actual ungrammaticality. Thus, the notions of acceptability and stylistic variation as well as lapses due to memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention, or other psychological factors are all classified under

"performance". Chomsky (1968) clearly states the focus of such a theory :

> "... if we hope to understand human language and the psychological capacities on which it rests, we must first ask what it is, not how or for what purpose it is used". (p. 62)

2.2 The Sociolinguistic Perspective

Hymes (1970) represents a shift away from what he calls "the Garden of Eden view", where the speaker/listener is an abstract isolated individual, rather than a person in a social world. Hymes retains Chomsky's contrast between the "Actual" and the "underlying", but extends the notion of competence as the underlying system, to include all rule system which describe our knowledge of language and how to use it. He redefines the view of competence to include not only Chomsky's linguistic competence (which is socially neutral) but also the concepts of appropriateness and acceptability (which Chomsky relegates to "performance"). This extended view of "competence" refers to the interaction between grammatical competence and socio-linguistic competence. Dimensions of Hymes' communicative competence include the extent to which something is formally possible, feasible, appropriate and actually performed. Hymes widens the scope of the analysis to include features of the environment. He therefore distinguishes between "correctness" which involves the rules of grammar, and "appropriateness" which involves rules of use. His analysis includes factors that determine

how utterances are appropriate to specific social contexts : participants, setting, scene, form of message, topic, purpose and choice of code.

Yet another landmark in the development of the notion of communicative competence, was the distinction made by Widdowson (1978) between "usage" (focussing on correctness) and "use" (dealing with appropriacy). Under communicative skills he includes medium, manner and mode of communication, and proposes a shift in the teaching of English away from usage (medium) towards use (manner, mode). While Widdowson's distinction between "usage" and "use" echoes Hymes' distinction between "correctness" (rules of grammar) and "appropriateness" (rules of use), his view of communication moves away from the focus on the underlying system (which is common to both Hymes and Chomsky), towards a preoccupation with "actual use". Widdowson (1983) further distinguishes between "competence", which is derived from conformity to pre-existing rules of behaviour, and "capacity", which is the ability to create meaning by exploiting the potential inherent in language. Thus, "competence" refers to rule-governed behaviour, while "capacity" refers to the application of these rules for a certain purpose.

Similarly, Brumfit (1980; 1984a) suggests that the notion of "accuracy" versus "fluency" accompanies the distinction between "usage" and "use". Brumfit emphasises the

operational abilities involved in language use, and associates the process of language learning with that of the acquisition of a new culture.

2.3 The Interactionist Perspective

Another perspective on the notion of communicative competence is its interactionist orientation. Halliday (1970) moves away from the Chomskyan standpoint, denying the usefulness of the distinction between "competence" and "performance". Halliday (1978) views language learning as a process of negotiation, whereby one learns to construct meaning. He refers to language as "social semiotic" :

> "Language actively symbolises the social system.... in the micro-encounters of everyday life where meanings are exchanged, language not only serves to facilitate and support other modes of social action that constitute its environment, but also actively creates an environment of its own... "
> (Halliday, 1978, p. 3)

According to Halliday (1973) language represents a series of functions[2]; all language is viewed as doing something : as purposive, non-random, contextualised activity. Such an approach, therefore, views meaning as a form of social action. Levi-Strauss (1962), Goffman (1964; 1974) and Cicourel (1973) had earlier discussed the process of negotiating relations, outcomes and meanings, thus constructing new realities and meanings. Wells (1981) views language as a form of interaction characterised by the negotiation of meaning. Similarly,

Milne (1981) discusses the relationship between speaker intention and hearer interpretation, and views language as interacting between the individual and his environment. Saville-Troike (1982) provides an added dimension to the notion of communicative competence by including not only linguistic knowledge but also interaction skills and cultural knowledge.[3] She stresses the shared yet individual nature of communicative competence. According to her, an analysis of communication, needs to account for : genre, topic, purpose/function, setting, participants, message form, message content, act sequence, rules for interaction, and norms for interpretation.

Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) further extend the notion of communicative competence to include the following areas of knowledge/skill[4] :

a. Grammatical competence

b. sociolinguistic competence

c. discourse competence

d. strategic competence

Their version retains the distinction between correctness/usage/grammatical rules on the one hand and appropriateness/use/sociolinguistic rules on the other, which is common to Hymes (1970) and Widdowson (1978). However, their definition of communicative competence goes beyond these to also

include elements of the process of negotiating meaning, which is inherent in Halliday's (1973) view of language; the components of discourse competence and strategic competence deal with the individual's ability to navigate within the communicative situation, in order to generate meaning.

2.4 The Ethnography of Communication

Hymes (1962) was one of the first to synthesise the disciplines of linguistics (the description and analysis of language codes) and ethnography (the description and analysis of culture). The focus of the ethnography of speaking, as delineated by Hymes (1962), would be on the patterning of communicative behaviour in relation to the holistic context of culture, and to patterns in other component systems of culture. A series of studies on the "functions of language in the classroom" (Tohn, 1972; Philips, 1972; Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez, 1972) have examined the relationship between language and the life-styles of the learners. Saville-Troike (1982) stresses that "the uses of language and speech in different societies have patterns of their own... intersecting with patterns in social organisation and other cultural domains" (p. 1). She mentions that ethnography gives greater priority to function, whereas speech act theory/pragmatics focusses on form. Scollon and Scollon (1983) also discuss the relationship between communicative style and ethnic stereotyping.[5] The theme running through all of

this body of literature is the close relationship between language and culture.

3. COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN AN ESL CONTEXT

3.1 Non-native Models

Within an ESL context, it may be more meaningful to locate communicative competence within the framework of the interactionist perspective and the ethnography of communication.

The acculturation of English in a non-native context is reflected in patterns of use of English that are unique to the sociocultural setting in which they function, in the process drawing upon a non-native model of English that more closely approximates the non-native cultural context, than a native-speaker model would. The implications of such a view go beyond merely upholding a non-native ESL variety as a model. Its significance lies not in the distance between the native-speaker and non-native speaker models, but in the uses which English serves in an ESL context, as opposed to a native-speaker context. Multilingualism and cultural pluralism in a setting such as India have led to the development of a range of functions for which English is used; the non-native model of English enacts these functions, which, in turn, are the outcome of cultural patterning. It is not so much a question of tolerating a different variety of English, as of accepting

that this difference exists, and that the interaction between language and culture is an essential feature of an ESL context.

Such a view is particularly relevant to a discussion of communicative competence in English in the Indian context, where a complex relationship exists between language and culture. Vanikar and Dalal (forthcoming) have extended the significance of the terms "native language" and "native culture" with reference to the Indian speaker of English, to include features transferred from other languages, including not only the Indian languages, but also English. For Indian learners of English, the notion of target language is modified to accommodate the model of English used by that very loosely defined group of people, the speakers of Indian English. Similarly, the culture associated with this target language is a composite of Western and Indian Cultures.

The non-native model emerges from the relationship between language and patterns in other component systems of the culture (Hymes, 1962). An ethnographic analysis of communication in English in India is likely to reveal patterns that are different from native-speaker use. This difference might result from the characteristic features of the Indian culture. For instance, Indian culture is community-oriented rather than individualistic; it places greater emphasis on cooperative patterns of interaction (face-saving), rather

than on assertive patterns (risk-taking). It might also be interesting to study the influence of age, sex and social role on ways in which English is used in India : for instance women/ adolescents/students are generally expected to enact a more submissive role - this is likely to be reflected in their language use. It is possible that the findings of such studies would support those of Philips (1972), Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez (1972), and others, with reference to the influence of cultural patterns on second language use.

3.2 The Speech Community

An emphasis on the ethnography of communication requires a redefinition of the term "speech community", since an analysis of communication is closely related to the uses of language within a particular speech community. Different criteria have been used for defining a "speech community" :

a. Bloomfield, 1933
b. Hockett, 1958
c. Gumperz, 1962

: frequency of interaction by a group of people

d. Lyons, 1970 : shared language use

e. Labov, 1972 : shared attitudes and values regarding language forms and use

f. Hymes, 1972 : shared rules of speaking and interpretations of speech performance

g. Sherzer, 1975 : shared sociocultural understandings and presuppositions with regard to speech

Saville-Troike (1982) stresses the dimension of "shared" knowledge :

> "There is no expectation that a community will be linguistically homogeneous, but as a collectivity it will include a range of language varieties (or even different languages) that will pattern in relation to the salient social and cultural dimensions of communication, such as role and domain". (pp. 19-20)

This appears to be similar to Kachru's (1982b) preference for Firth's (1959) term "speech fellowship", rather than "speech community". Saville-Troike also distinguishes between "hard-shelled" speech communities, which have more definite boundaries, and "soft-shelled" ones, which primarily use one of the world languages and are more likely to allow for interaction across the boundaries.

In accepting such a view of speech community for the purpose of the present study, we no longer consider an individual as a member of just one speech community. He is simultaneously a member of a range of speech communities, and constantly exercises options in identifying with any one of these communities, at a given point of time, within a particular setting, and for a particular communicative purpose. Even a slight change in setting/interlocutor/communicative purpose might lead to a temporary shift in the individual's affiliation from one speech community to another.

In this sense, the speech community may be defined both linguistically and extra-linguistically, depending on which membership the individual chooses to operationalise on a given occasion.

The following example serves to illustrate the view of "speech community" adopted in the present study :

A Konkani speaker living in Bombay may have access to membership of several speech communities, on the basis of :

a.	Geographic region of origin	:	Village near Mangalore
b.	Geographic region of residence	:	Bombay
c.	Lifestyle of region of origin	:	Rural
d.	Lifestyle of region of residence	:	Urban
e.	Physical traits	:	Skin colour, build, features
f.	Ethnic/religious affiliation	:	Mangalorean Christian
g.	Mother-tongue	:	Konkani
h.	Other languages known	:	Kannada, Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, English
i.	Socio-economic level	:	Low-income group
j.	Sex	:	Female
k.	Age	:	Early 40's

l. Social role : Household servant

m. Earlier co-residents : Family of origin

n. Present co-residents : Family where employed

The individual's choice of language/code will reflect the speech community that she shares with different interlocutors, as illustrated below :

Interlocutor	Basis for Membership of Speech Community	Choice of Language
a. Niece	Village of origin	Konkani
b. Fellow servant	District of origin	Kannada
c. Neighbour	Urban residence	Marathi
d. Doctor	Urban residence	Hindi
e. Friend	Religious affiliation/low socio-economic level	"Bazaar" English
f. Employer's friend	Religious affiliation/high socio-economic level	"Standard" English
g. Employer	Ethnic affiliation of employer	Parsi Gujarati

On any given day, this individual may need to interact with several of these speech communities. She may choose to exercise or temporarily surrender membership to any of these speech communities, according to the contextual demand of the

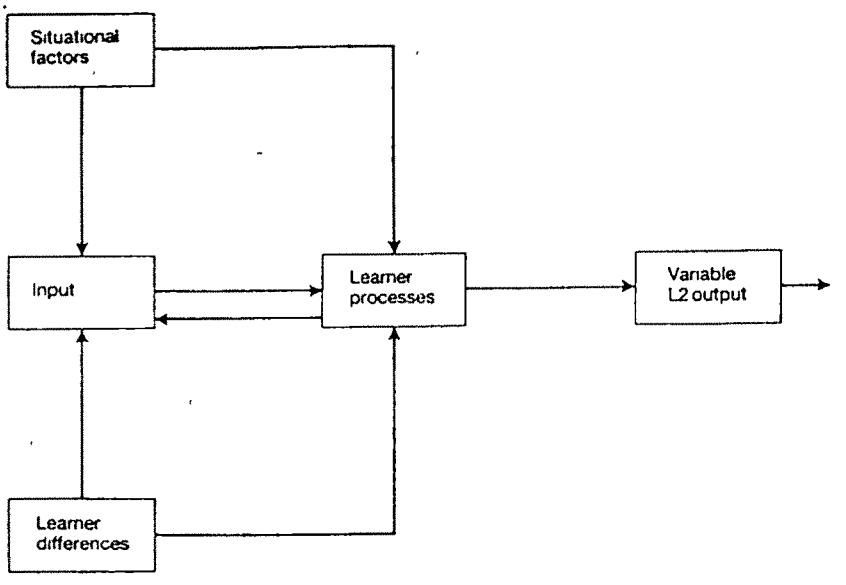
situation. Rather than distinguish between "hard-shelled" and "soft-shelled" communities, it may therefore be more useful to consider the boundaries of any speech community as being constantly re-drawn, on the basis of the demands made by each communicative situation.

This takes us back to the issue of the appropriate model(s). Part of the native-speakers' reaction against non-native models (as discussed in Chapter II) is the result of an attempt to arrive at a single model of English for international communication. In a multilingual/multicultural network such as India, it might be more appropriate to consider a hierarchy of models. Thus the model of English appropriate to the ESL context is not a static one; development of the model is a constant process of evolution related to the communicative demands of each situation.[6]

It may be useful to apply the concept of language ecology presented by Saville-Troike (1982) and Kachru (1983) to the discussion of communicative competence in the ESL context. It has to be recognised that the total language ecology of a situation would determine the kinds of interaction, and hence the variety of language that is used. Such a view of language suggests that communicative competence is closely related to cultural competence; differences in the model of English may be related to the interplay between cultural factors and communicative competence.

3.3 Differential competence

It would be appropriate to consider differential or variable competence (Hymes, 1970; Ellis, 1985) (see Figure 2) as an important aspect of communicative competence in an ESL setting; it would not be very relevant, in the ESL context, to interpret communicative competence as a homogeneous "product". It might be more appropriate to accept the existence of differential competence, as conditioned both by shifts from one speech community to another, and by the situational context for each communicative event. For instance, the Konkani speaker mentioned earlier might need to demonstrate a certain "incompetence" in English when talking to another Konkani speaker from a low socio-economic group, but perhaps not with an Indian-English speaker from a comparatively higher socio-economic group. Both these - the relative "incompetence" and the relative "competence" in English - would be indicators of the speaker's real communicative competence within the sociocultural ecology of English in India. Socio-cultural factors constantly influence the model in use. Such a view of communicative competence therefore implies that the model is a comparatively fluid one, representing a constant process of evolution due to the transitional nature of the notion of competence.



Source : Ellis, R. (1985). Understanding Second Language Acquisition. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 276.

Figure 2 : A Framework for Examining the Components of Second Language Acquisition

3.4 Strategic Competence

Strategic competence is central to the redefined notion of communicative competence adopted in this study. The notion of strategic competence is drawn from the definition of communicative competence presented by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), and extended to account for all strategic behaviour.

It would be useful, initially to arrive at a definition of the term "strategy" appropriate to the context of the present study. Some of the most general definitions of "strategy", as they appear in dictionaries/encyclopaedias, consider the notion of strategy in the context of warfare; the word "strategy" has been used in military sciences for centuries, and is derived from the Greek "Strategos" which meant "general". However, the essential features of the term are relevant to a description of all strategies. The Reader's Digest Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary mentions "planning" and "directing" as features of strategy; the reference to strategy as "art" suggests a degree of creativity in strategic behaviour.[7] The Collins English Dictionary also highlights the planning aspect of strategy; moreover, by associating "strategy" with "Strategem", the element of trick or deceit is also introduced.[8] The definition offered by the Longman Dictionary extends the aspect of planning, to include plans "for winning success".[9] Moreover, the Longman Dictionary

defines the term "tactics", which it considers to be similar to "strategy", as "the art of using existing means to get a desired result";[10] according to this definition, the term strategy also appears to connote manipulation of available resources to achieve a goal.

The discussion of the term "strategy" may initially be related to a general cognitivist framework. Leont'ev (1975) distinguishes between "reflectory behaviour" which refers to a fixed connection between a stimulus and a response and "intellectual behaviour" which is goal-related and involves choice from among various alternatives. Miller, Galanter and Pribram (1960) have referred to plans as cognitive structures underlying verbal reception and production.

The notion of "strategy" as belonging to the superordinate class of "plan" has also been referred to in the various discussions of the hierarchical nature of the encoding process. Miller, Galanter and Pribram (1960) present the following hierarchy :

a. Plan for the sentence

b. Strategic and generative level (grammatical/ semantic decisions)

c. Tactical levels (motor skills, exteriorising mechanisms)

Similarly Osgood (1965) distinguishes between four levels :

a. Motivational : plan for sentence

b. Semantic
c. Sequential : strategic

d. Integrational : tactical

Leeson (1975) again refers to three levels, of which the strategic level is the least automatic :

a. Strategic : imposes on the utterance its broad shape

b. Generative : structural/syntactic decision-making

c. Integrational : implements decisions taken and exteriorises them in acceptable forms of language.

Through all these discussions, a relationship has been established between "strategy" and "plan".

The cognitivist view of strategy includes analysis of the situation and of available resources, in order to arrive at a goal. Leont'ev (1975, p. 153) suggests that "the orientation about the situation and the conditions of the task" leads to the "selection of the plan of action". Rehbein (1977, p. 41) also refers to the "assessment of the

situational conditions". Similarly, Faerch and Kasper (1983a, p. 26) suggest that "the individual has to assess the situational conditions in order to select the most appropriate plan".

It is this aspect of situational assessment that allows us to integrate the distinctly cognitivist view of strategy proposed by Faerch and Kasper (1983a, 1984) with the interactionist view suggested by Tarone (1981b). A broad view of interaction would include not only direct interaction between two or more interlocutors physically present at the same moment, but also interaction involving no feedback or delayed feedback, as in written communication or the mass media, and interaction between the individual and the environment.

The present study therefore views strategy as planned behaviour, whereby the individual adapts his use of strategy to his assessment of the situation and his relationship with his interlocutor(s), manipulating all available resources in order to reach a goal. Based on this view of strategy, the notion of strategic competence refers to the individual's ability to implement strategies effectively towards communication. It is in this sense that strategic competence assumes central importance within the larger framework of communicative competence. The other competencies, viz., linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and

discourse competence are all operationalised as a result of the individual's strategic competence, his ability to marshall all resources (linguistic, as well as sociocultural) towards a communicative goal.

4. COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND THE CLASSROOM SETTING

4.1 The Teaching/Learning Situation

The discussion of communicative competence in the ESL context needs to be related to the teaching/learning situation in the ESL classroom. The language classroom in India, whether at school level or at college level, has traditionally maintained as its chief objective the development of linguistic/grammatical competence in English. Undoubtedly, a certain basic level of linguistic competence is essential to effective communication, and needs to be included on the curriculum. However, we also need to recognise that the ESL context calls for an emphasis on the learner's strategic competence, as a means of operationalising linguistic sociolinguistic and discourse competence. ESL classrooms in India rarely focus on the development of other competencies. The traditional English classroom in India is one where large numbers of learners are expected to behave as one collective participant; the kind of language learning aimed at is therefore largely a cognitive process. The integrated view of competence in the present study, drawing upon both the

cognitivist and the interactionist framework, requires that language learning is also viewed as a process of interaction. It is, therefore, necessary to closely examine all behaviour that occurs within the teaching/learning situation in order to arrive at a better understanding of the process of second language learning.

4.2 The Negotiation of Learning

According to Hatch (1978), "language learning evolves out of learning how to carry on conversations". This statement encapsulates an interactionist perspective on second language learning; the role of the learner is redefined in the context of other learners. On the one hand, Hatch equates "language" with "conversation", on the other hand, she equates language learning with the ability to maintain conversation within or outside the classroom. The two sets of equivalences are linked by the recognition that "conversation" is central to communication, the term "conversation" being interpreted in the wide sense of a process of interaction with the interlocutor. This pattern of equivalences may be extended to accommodate the relationship between negotiation and learning. If the responsibility for maintaining communication is given to the learners, the process of negotiation among the learners is likely to enhance language learning.

Allwright (1980) discusses the negotiation of learning, which is an essential feature of the ESL classroom - even a totally teacher-centred classroom :

> "Teachers may have definite plans for any particular learner, but learners are in some sort of bargaining position. In short, the management of participation by teachers and by learners is a negotiated process and potentially a crucially important one." (p. 166)

The present study is thus concerned with the transactional nature of the learning process. The extent and type of teacher-pupil/pupil - pupil transactions is what shapes, and in fact constitutes the learning process in the classroom. Transaction is a central feature of both learning and communication. The two cannot be viewed as separate processes, each implies the simultaneous occurrence of the other; hence the significance of what Mehan (1974) calls "accomplishing classroom lessons". It is not the syllabus/ teaching plan/text that embodies the "lesson"; the "lesson" acquires actuality only as a result of the process of negotiation between teacher and learners. Such negotiation may, of course, vary in the degree of passiveness on the part of the learner. For instance, Allwright (1984) insists that even silence or absence on the part of the learner is semantically significant; it shapes the course of the interaction, and therefore shapes what is learnt. Barnes (1976)

elaborates on the "hidden curriculum"[11] in discussing the inseparability of what is said and how it is said from the social relationships in which the speech is embedded. Edwards and Furlong (1978) suggest a reciprocal relationship between meaning and situational context. Findings from studies by John (1972), Phillips (1972) and Gumperz and Hermandez - Chavez (1972) further support the view that styles of learning are closely related to styles of teaching.

The theme running through all of this research reflects the basic assumption that the learner is central to the process of learning. The learner is a participant even during instances of non-participation. Actively or passively, the learner is in control of the processes of participation, of learning, of shaping meaning, and hence of communicating. In all learning, and particularly so in language learning, it is impossible to separate what is learnt from how it is learnt. An understanding of the process of second language learning therefore will emerge from a study of how the individual learns to shape and negotiate meaning, rather than a study of the content of what he learns.

4.3 The Management of Discourse

If we accept that the negotiation of meaning by the learners is central to the process of language learning, we also need to take into account the body of literature on

discourse within and outside the classroom. The argument here is that the management of discourse by the learner is integral to the shaping of meaning, and therefore to the language learning process.

Much of the recent literature in the field of discourse analysis is based on thinking in the 1950's and 1960's, which established a relationship between saying and doing. Grice (1957) connected meaning to intention : the speaker's intention to produce an effect on the hearer, and the hearer's recognition of this intention. Austin (1962) viewed saying as doing, and therefore considered talk as the performance of illocutionary/perlocutionary acts.[12] The discussion by Searle (1969) of speech acts also placed the theory of language within a theory of action. Pioneering work in operationalising speech act theory was undertaken by Flanders (1970) and Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). The category system proposed by Flanders (FIAC) (1970) for analysing classroom discourse was based on a distinction between "initiation" and "response" in classroom talk. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) identified a three-part exchange (initiation - response - feedback) that is characteristic of classroom discourse.[13] The work done by Flanders (1970), Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and others, has highlighted the differences between discourse within and outside the classroom. It has been suggested that various situations are

characterised by different "styles of talk" (Burton, 1981). Several studies have identified the occurrence, and particularly the predictability of feedback as distinguishing classroom discourse from casual conversation (Stubbs, 1976a; Burton, 1978; Coulthard and Brazil, 1979; Berry, 1981). Other features of classroom discourse that have been identified are :

- the frequency of metacommunicative acts, particularly by the teacher (Stubbs, 1976b; Edwards and Furlong, 1978).
- the occurrence of pseudo - questions (Barnes, 1969; Edwards and Furlong, 1978; Hatch and Long, 1980).
- the centralisation of discourse (Hammersley, 1974; Edwards, 1976; Edwards and Furlong, 1978).
- the unequal distribution of power (Flanders, 1965; Bellack, Kliebard, Hyman and Smith, 1966; Philips, 1972; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Hatch and Long, 1980; Burton, 1981).

The definition of the term 'discourse' offered by Widdowson (1983) is particularly useful for the present study. Widdowson defines discourse as the use of sentences in combination . In contrasting the 'textual' approach and the 'discourse' approach, he suggests that the former concentrates on 'sentences in combination', the latter on

'use of sentences'. The distinguishing feature of discourse according to this definition is therefore the feature of 'use'. Central to the present study is the actuality of discourse - literally, language as it is used in the process of language learning.

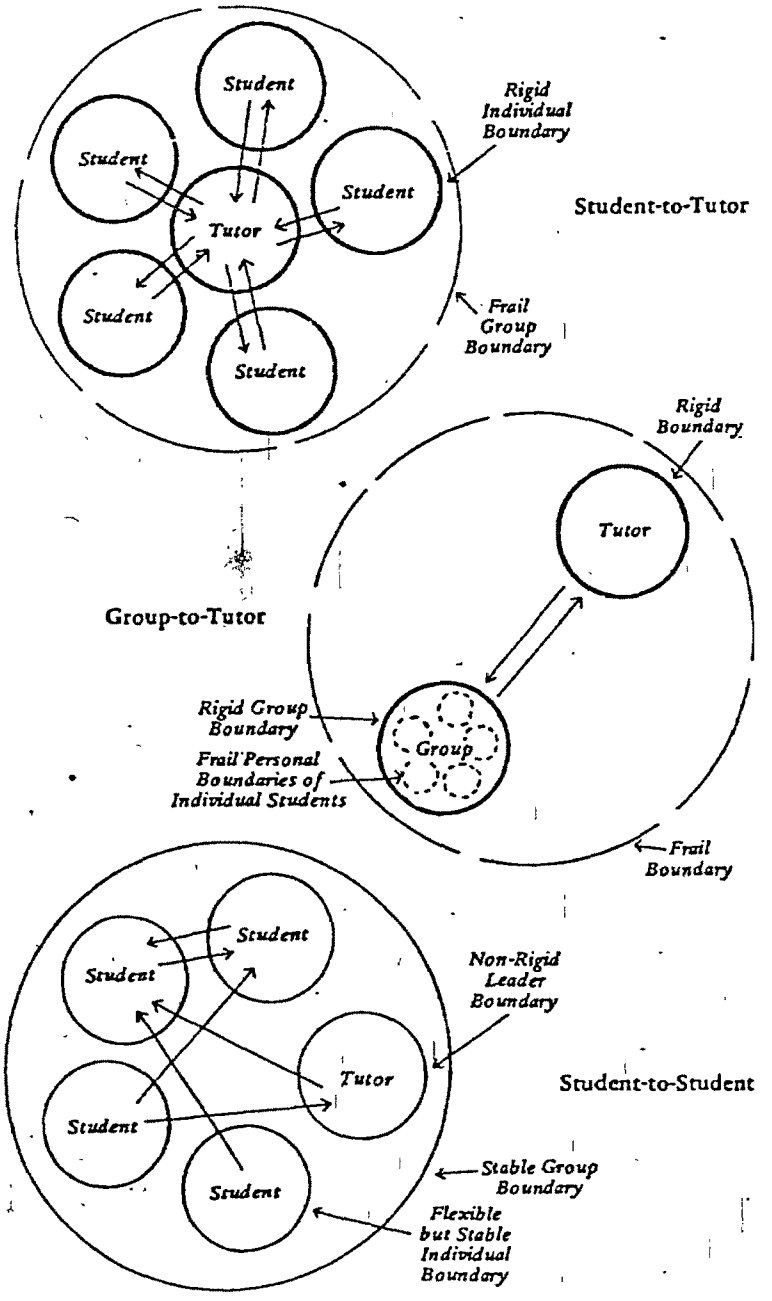
Findings from studies of discourse within and outside the classroom are relevant to the present research because they suggest a relationship between the nature of the discourse and the type of interaction. Classroom discourse - in the sense in which Widdowson uses the term 'discourse' - consists not merely of sentences strung together in sequence, but of the use of language during the complex process of interaction that takes place within the classroom between teacher, learners, text, propositional content and socio-semantic content. What is said in the classroom - actual classroom discourse - constitutes much of what is learnt; in this sense, classroom discourse embodies what Jackson (1968) calls "the hidden curriculum". It is therefore through the joint management of discourse by the participants that a link is established between type of discourse, type of interaction and language learning.

4.4 Interaction and Language Learning : the Development of Strategic Competence

There has been extensive research on interaction, forms of talk, and learning. Goffman (1964; 1974; 1981) and

Argyle (1967) had described the social organisation of learning. Early research on classroom climate (Lippitt and White, 1943; Anderson, Brewer, Brewer and Reed, 1946; Perkins, 1951) had already established a connection between patterns of teaching behaviour and resulting pupil responses. Flanders (1965; 1970) and others attempted to relate classroom interaction to learning effectiveness. This body of research provided exhaustive data on the classroom as social setting (Flanders, 1965; Gumperz and Herasimchuk, 1972; Hammersley, 1974; Edwards, 1976; Stubbs, 1976a; Barnes and Todd, 1977; Burton, 1978; Edwards and Furlong, 1978). Barnes and Todd (1977), in a detailed analysis of communication and learning in small groups, raise the issue of social power assumed by the teacher in the conventional classroom. They suggest that small group discussions shift the allocation of power away from the teacher, and hence influence the process of formulating meaning. Control over learning strategies is moved over into the learners' hands, thus making a wider range of speech roles available to the learners. Bramley (1979) describes how communication in small groups allows for centralised and/or dyadic modes of communication, as well as for a more complex network of communication channels (See Figure 3).

Subsequent literature on discourse (Berry, 1981; Stubbs, 1983; Riley, 1984; 1985b) acknowledges the



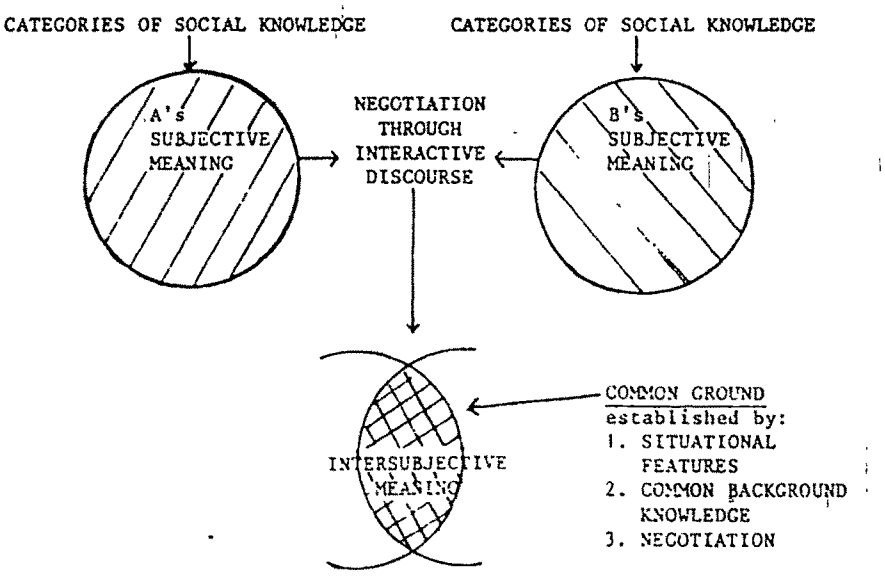
Source : Bramley, W. (1979). Group Tutoring : Concepts and Case Studies. London : Kogan Page, 53.

Figure 3 : Modes of Communication in Small Groups

interpersonal/interactive feature of discourse (See Figure 4). Riley (1985b) decribes various levels of discoursality: interaction, illocution, content and realisation.[14] In keeping with his view of the interactive nature of discourse, Riley extends the notion of coherence; the criterion for coherence is no longer based only on the speaker's expectations but also includes what the addressee provides.[15] Stubbs (1983) has also suggested that coherence in discourse is a joint production of speaker and hearer.[16]

Recognition of the interactive nature of discourse promotes the view that communication is a form of transaction, of negotiation between speaker and hearer. Brown and Yule (1983) refer to the transactional and the interactional functions of language.[17] Bruner (1983) also suggests that certain language formats, such as those used in indicating and requesting, are designed to achieve joint attention and joint action. If we consider the view that all communication is interactive/transactional, within the context of the classroom, we find that talk is central to the process of learning (Philips, 1972). Interaction between teachers and pupils involves a process of transaction, meaning being constructed as a result of negotiation (Cortis, 1977; Barnes and Todd, 1977; Allwright, 1984).

The transactional/interactive view of classroom discourse is particularly relevant to the process of



Source : Riley, P. (1984). "Your slip is showing : Communicative interference in second language learning", in Willems, G. and Riley, P. (eds.), Communicative Foreign Language Teaching and the Training of Foreign Language Learners. Nancy : Interstudie Institute for Teacher Education, 40.

Figure 4 : The Process of Negotiation of Meaning through Interactive Discourse

language learning. Meaning is viewed as fluid, constantly evolving during communication, and being shaped by the process of interaction between participants. In the conventional classroom setting the construction of meaning is directed, often dictated, by the teacher. If the structure of classroom interaction is changed to accommodate discussions by groups of learners, there would be a corresponding shift in roles. Since all participants would share equal status (as opposed to the teacher-pupil relationship), there would be a more genuine negotiation of meaning, which would to a certain extent approximate social reality.

Thus the process of communication in the classroom also involves learning social skills (Flanders, 1965; Stubbs, 1976; Brown, 1981; Wilkins, 1983). The literature on communication and communicative language teaching has already established a link between interaction and learning (Barnes, 1976; Barnes and Todd, 1977; Wells, 1981; Wilkins, 1983). Recently researchers have more specifically suggested that language learning is closely related to styles of interaction (Wong-Fillmore, 1976; Neimoianu, 1980; Johnson, 1983; Strong, 1983; Saville-Troike, 1984). The present study suggests that language, cognitive knowledge and social knowledge are not viewed as discrete domains; it is within the interaction of these three domains that communicative competence is located.

The present study is based on the assumption that the process of shaping meaning through the negotiation of social roles in learner-learner interaction is related to the

process of language learning. Interaction between learners during small group discussions makes available a variety of social roles, and hence a range of communicative options, to each learner. The actual communicative options exercised by individual learners is likely to vary along with their interactional styles. Thus each learner would, in the process of interaction, be required to implement a series of strategies; interaction in the language classroom, therefore involves the development of strategic competence, whereby the learner draws upon all available resources to reach a communicative goal.

FOOTNOTES

1. The distinction made by Saussure (1916) between "langue" and "parole", is based on a similar dichotomy.

2. Halliday (1973) describes language as functioning in the following ways :

   a. Instrumental : a means of getting things done

   b. Regulatory : an instrument of control

   c. Interactional : use in interaction between self and others

   d. Personal : a form of individuality

   e. Heuristic : a means of exploring environment, investigating reality

f. Imaginative : creating a world of one's own

g. Representational : Means of communication about something; expressing propositions

3. Saville-Troike (1982, pp. 25-6) includes the following as components of communicative competence :

1. Linguistic Knowledge

   a. Verbal elements

   b. Non-verbal elements

   c. Patterns of elements in particular speech events

   d. Range of possible variants (in all elements and their organisation)

   e. Meaning of variants in particular situations

2. Interaction Skills

   a. Perception of salient features in communicative situations

   b. Selection/interpretation of forms appropriate to specific situations, roles and relationships (rules for the use of speech)

   c. Norms of interaction and interpretation

   d. Strategies for achieving goals

3. Cultural Knowledge

   a. Social structure

   b. Values and attitudes

   c. Cognitive map/schema

   d. Enculturation processes (transmission of knowledge and skills.

4. Canale (1983, pp. 7-11) describes communicative competence as including the following :

   a. Grammatical competence : includes features and rules of language such as vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, spelling and linguistic semantics;

   b. Sociolinguistic competence : addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts, depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of interaction and norms or conventions of interaction;

   c. Discourse competence : concerns the mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken and written text in different genres;

   d. Strategic competence : includes mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action for two reasons : (i) to compensate for breakdown in communication due to limiting conditions in actual communication or due to insufficient competence in one or more of the other areas of communicative competence; and (ii) to enhance the effectiveness of communication.

5. Scollon and Scollon (1983) discuss possible problems of interpretation in inter-ethnic communication, including global politeness systems, values placed on taciturnity and volubility, and conventional patterns of communication for expressing dominant/submissive relations.

6. It is in this context that one appreciates the significance of Kachru's (1985c) phrase "the alchemy of English".

7. The definition of "strategy" as per The Reader's Digest Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary, is as follows :

   "Strategy : Generalship, art of war; art of planning and directing larger military movements and operations of campaign of war".

8. The Collins English Dictionary provides the following definitions :

> "Stratagem : a plan or trick, esp. one to deceive an enemy".
>
> "Strategy : 1. the art or science of the planning and conduct of a war. 2. the practice or art of using stratagems, as in politics, business, etc. 3. a plan or stratagem."

9. The term "Strategy" is defined in the Longman Dictionary as follows :

> "Strategy : 1. the art of planning movement of armies or forces in war : 'a general who was a master of strategy' - compare TACTICS. 2. a particular plan for winning success in a particular activity, as in war, a game, a competition, or for personal advantage : 'Why should he give me a present ? It must be a strategy to make me let him go on holiday alone'. 3. Skilful planning generally : 'She uses strategy to get what she wants'."

10. The definition of the term "tactics", offered by the Longman Dictionary is as follows :

> "Tactics : 1. the art of arranging military forces for battle and moving them during battle : 'the tactics of drawing an enemy into a trap'. 2. the art of using existing means to get a desired result : 'If you want to be a successful politician you must make yourself able in tactics' - compare STRATEGY."

11. The phrase "the hidden curriculum" was first used by Jackson (1968).

12. Austin (1962; pp. 99-102) described an illocutionary act as the "performance of an act in saying something" (such as "urging", "advising", "ordering"). Thus illocutionary force refers to the different functions of language. Similarly, a perlocutionary act refers to occasions when saying something produces certain

effects upon the feelings, thoughts or actions of the speaker, the audience or others (such as "persuading"). Thus perlocutionary acts may refer to design or intention.

13. Other studies have also identified a typical exchange framework for teacher-student talk :

a.	Bellack, Hyman, Smith and Kliebard (1966)	: Structuring-Soliciting-responding-reacting
b.	Mishler (1975)	: Question - response - confirmation

14. Riley (1985b) suggests that a communicative act may, for instance, be acceptable as discourse at the interactive level, but not at the illocutionary level, or vice versa.

15. Interestingly enough, although Hoey (1983) states that he does not adopt an interactive model in his view of discourse, his discussion of the expectations set up in the reader/listener also assigns an important role to the addressee.

16. Stubbs (1983) suggests that the term be spelt as "cohearence" as a reminder that many of the linking mechanisms of conversation need to be heard to be appreciated.

17. The transactional and the interactional functions of language, as described by Brown and Yule (1983), refer to the transfer of information and to the maintenance of social relationships, respectively. The former function is more message-oriented, the latter more listener-oriented.