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SECOND LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY

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by

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INTRODUCTION

Communication, one of the most pervasive elements of human experience, is also one of the least understood. Although we interact with others in our daily activities, we do so without conscious knowledge of the structural properties of communication. Far from being simple and prosaic, verbal communication is extremely sophisticated social behavior which requires, in addition to knowledge and use of the various components of grammar, constant attention to and modification of our own and the interlocutor's input and output.

This research will focus on three areas of interest stemming from the communication of learners of English as a second language (ESL). First, we will examine what makes communication between native speakers and non-native speakers of a language possible in spite of the incongruities between their grammars. The rules of conversation become vividly apparent when one of them is violated. This of course also happens in conversations among native speakers of a language, but the stark reality of conversational

conventions cannot be more obvious than in conversations where one of the participants is a non-native speaker because the opportunities for mutual misunderstanding are that much more numerous. It has often been observed that grammatical knowledge is not a necessary prerequisite to successful communication. Learners of a second language often manage to communicate quite successfully while lacking the grammatical accuracy native speakers take for granted. However, in spite of all the difficulties, potential and real, communication does take place. What is it that non-native speakers and their native speaker interlocutors do to make communication possible?

Our second goal will be to make an attempt at developing an objective measure of effective communication between native speakers and non-native speakers of a language. Our priority will be to identify some of the components of effective communication and then provide an operational definition which will serve as the basis for an attempt to quantify communicative effectiveness. The history of science is full of examples where phenomena which had been previously thought to be unquantifiable became measureable and led to subsequent unforeseen discoveries. We have no illusions about the finality of the measure of communicative effectiveness that we propose; we see it rather as only the opening move in the process toward developing a truly objective measure.

Our third and final objective will be to investigate the effects of communication strategies and learning strategies on the acquisition of a second language. Which one of these strategies leads to the acquisition of all the components of language competence and which perhaps leads to a dead end?

The final goal was the impetus for this study. We originally set out to test the hypothesis that individuals who readily participate in conversation would be more successful at mastering all facets of the target language than individuals who were less eager to participate. This hypothesis follows from the assumption that second language learning involves the testing of linguisitc hypotheses just as first language learning does. Therefore, learners who produce lots of speech in conversation, presumably have many more opportunities for testing their hypotheses about the structure of the target language than do learners who produce less speech; consequently, the former should attain superior grammatical competence than the latter, and in less time. Our original research hypothesis was that learners who produce lots of conversational acts would score significantly higher on tests of grammar and would speak with greater grammatical accuracy than learners who produce fewer conversational acts. The null hypothesis is that there would be no difference between the two types of learners.

The method we adopt in this research involves analyzing transcripts of tape-recorded conversations between a teacher of English as a second language and his students. The transcripts are coded according to a system adapted from the work of Martin (1979), Labov and Fanshel (1977), Halliday and Hasan (1976), Dore (1979), Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977), Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and others. All conversational acts--the minimal units of conversation--are classified as one of four major act catagories: Assertives, Requestives, Responsives, and Repair Initiations. An index is compiled for each student, consisting of how much he communicates, i.e., the average number of conversational acts per turn, divided by the proportion of Repair Initiations to all other conversational acts in the interviewer's speech. Our efforts should not be viewed as primarily setting out to test hypotheses, but as attempting to develop methods for analyzing the speech of second language learners and formulate new hypotheses about the processes of second language communication and acquisition.

Talking with Second Language Learners. Many researchers have reported the phenomenon of learners being able to communicate adequately in a second language with only rudimentary knowledge of the grammar of that language. Savignon (1972:20) found that American college students learning French could convey meaning without linguistic accuracy. Upshur (1973)

found that "students with only limited command of English could communicate perfectly if they were given enough time" (p. 181). And Schumann (1976) maintains that the morpho-syntactic elements in English, which usually present such great trouble for ESL learners, "are unnecessary for simple referential communication, but...are necessary to sound like a member of the group whose language contains these features" (p. 395).

Although these writers report interesting findings, they do not explain what it is that second language learners and their interlocutors do to make communication possible in spite of the lack of grammatical markings. This question can be answered only by analyzing conversations between second language learners and native speakers. Based on experience in talking to ESL learners, intuition, and a preliminary analysis of a conversation between the investigator and an ESL student, it was hypothesized that although learners with limited grammatical ability can usually get their message across, they do it only with a great deal of cooperation and assistance from their interlocutors. Without such aid, productive communication would be impossible.[1] "Productive communication may be roughly defined as follows: as a result of some action by a speaker (or writer) his audience creates a new concept. Successful communication implies a correspondence between the intentions of a speaker

and the concept created by his audience" (Upshur, 1973:179).

In conversation, whether between native speakers or between a native speaker and a non-native speaker, there are times when productive communication breaks down, or the speaker fails to make himself clear so the hearer must double check his reading of what the speaker intended to say. That is, he must check to see whether the concept created in his mind is indeed the same concept the speaker meant to convey, and in doing so initiate a repair sequence.[2] Repair initations in conversations between native speakers and non-native speakers may occur under the following conditions:

a) The hearer thinks he understands the concept expressed but is not completely sure, so he asks for a confirmation by either paraphrasing what the speaker said:

(1) K: Never had, uh, speech in class before.

T: <u>You never had to make a speech</u>?

K: No. (p. 11)

or repeating part or all of it:

(2) K: We got big family--very noisy (giggling).

T: <u>Very noisy</u>?

K: Yes. (p. 22)

b) The hearer recognizes the direction in which the speaker wants to go, but the concept expressed is not fully developed, so he expands it in accordance with his understanding of it.

(3) (Talking about her cousin teaching her English when she first came here).

G: He was teach me my cousin, sometime.

T: And he was living here longer than you?

G: Yeah, he--some person--is he born in here. (p. 22)

c) The hearer does not understand or does not believe what the speaker has said, so he asks for a clarification of the remark:

(4) C: Can I drop anything class?

T: Can you what?

C: Drop.

Drop out the class. (p. 20)

These few examples illustrate what happens when a learner produces utterances which are deviant in some respect: much time and effort, which could be used productively to exchange information and ideas, are consumed confirming and clarifying the learner's utterances. Communication is thus made possible through the efforts of the interlocutor.

In face-to-face conversation, second language learners have a few additional advantages working for them. If they are talking to someone they are acquainted with, they may be familiar with their interlocutor's ideas, interests, beliefs, habits, etc. They have the advantage of knowing the situational context and the role they are expected to play in it. Body language and facial expressions provide

further cues as to whether they are understood or whether more effort is needed to get the message across. As Jones (1977:240) writes: "It is possible to order a meal, get a hotel room, purchase a train ticket, or get directions without speaking or understanding a word of the language, but such a limited concept of communication misses the whole point. There is a great deal of difference between coping and groping in the foreign language. We must not lose sight of the fact that language is still the basis for communication."

In addition to the facilitative effects of an interlocutor's repair initiations, second language learners, it would appear, develop their own individualized strategies in order to communicate, or at least to present a picture of communicating in the second language. For example, some learners genuinely try to exchange ideas, but in doing so end up groping--mispronouncing words, using circumlocution, coining neologisms, asking for clarification, and so on; other learners cope in conversation, supplying the expected information in a comprehensible manner; while still others do little more than respond to questions, or agree with statements using single-word utterances. Some initiate self- and other-repairs; others do not. How can the communicative effectiveness of such learners be gauged and compared?

Tests of Communicative Competence.[3] The formal linguistic study of face-to-face communication is only in its

nascent stage and, needless to say, there are few available means for quantifying communicative effectiveness. Over the last ten years there has been much talk among language teachers and researchers about the need for a measure of "communicative competence." However, few concrete proposals have been made mainly because of the difficulties presented by the unpredictability of conversation. "The teacher cannot tell the student specifically what he or she must do to participate successfully in a communicative situation" (Chastain, 1980:509).

Upshur (1973) discusses a procedure which solves the problem of defining successful communication in the following way:

> (1) The examinee is presented with four pictures differing on one of two conceptual dimensions. These may represent, for example, a person performing four different "actions," or the four conjunctive possibilities of a man with or without a hat walking up or down a staircase.
>
> (2) The examinee is instructed to provide a single sentence description to a visually remote audience of one picture which is randomly selected from the set.
>
> (3) The audience--the examiner--makes a best guess as to which picture is being described.
>
> (4) The examinee's directed intentions are compared with the examiner's guesses (Upshur, 1973:180).

The major criticism that can be levelled against this method of testing communication is that it is not representative of the requirements placed on an individual in a true communicative situation. This method fails to take into account the

interactional nature of oral communication. It deals only with sending and receiving messages, but ignores feedback, a crucial element in all interpersonal communication (Berlo, 1960).

Another means of assessing oral proficiency which has been used for many years is the interview. The Foreign Service Institute has been using the oral interview as a measure of the communication skills of its personnel. Two interviewers quiz a candidate in a foreign language on a number of predetermined topics, and rate his/her performance on a scale of 0 to 5. Communicative ability is evaluated in terms of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. This would appear to be an effective means for evaluating oral proficiency; however, it requires highly skilled interviewers and a great deal of time. Moreover, the interviewers have to make subjective judgements about the interviewee's communication skills. What is least satisfactory about the Foreign Service Oral Interview is that it includes grammar in the set of communicative parameters, which may tend to make this measure more a test of correct usage than communicative effectiveness.

Jakobovits (1970) suggests eight specific activities for an oral interview designed to assess communicative ability: "Opening a conversation and leave taking, obtaining information to solve a particular problem, engaging in idle conversation, carrying out serious conversation on particular

topics, executing socially common but informal activities, reporting an event or describing an ongoing activity, effectiveness of information transmission" (Jakobovits, 1970: 136-137).

The method for measuring the effectiveness of information transmission that Jakobovits proposes is similar to the one put forth by Upshur: the examinee and examiner are separated by a screen and the examinee has to successfully send and receive messages. The purpose of the screen is to block non-verbal cues, thus presumably isolating the interviewee's linguistic skills. However, communication entails more than merely sending and receiving verbal messages. Communication involves sending, receiving, and modifying messages on the basis of verbal and non-verbal feedback. In so far as the communicative activities are concerned, all the students in our sample were able to perform such activities when the occasion arose in the interviews. It is difficult to say whether certain activity types were omitted by some students because they were unable to use them or because the occasion for their use never came up. With Jakobovits' method such a difficulty would never have arisen, but his approach sacrifices communicative authenticity for predictable data.

A much-quoted study on "communicative competence" is that done by Savignon (1972) who investigated the effectiveness of two teaching methods on skill in communicating in a foreign language. Three groups of beginning level college French students were given the same type of classroom instruction,

but differed in the type of "lab" activity they were assigned to participate in for a 50-minute period each week. One group spent its time in a language laboratory working on material presented in the course. Another group was presented in English with pleasurable experiences with "things French," such as films and discussions. The third group was divided into smaller groups and given "training in performing specific communicative acts" (p. 16).

At the end of the training period the students' "communicative competence" was evaluated on the basis of their ability to perform the following activities: discussion, information-getting, reporting, and description. "The emphasis was not on how something was said but rather on whether anything meaningful was said at all" (Savignon, 1972:41). Sets of criteria were established for each of these activities, such as amount of communication, effort to communicate, comprehensibility, naturalness and poise, etc. Six-point scales were used to rate the subjects on each of these criteria. For most activities, the evaluations were done by the interviewer immediately following the experimental session. Reporting and description were evaluated from tape recordings along a six-point scale in terms of fluency and comprehensibility.

As expected, the group which had been given practice in communicating in French did best on the measures of communicative skill.[4]

Savignon's approach is a more finely tuned version of Jakobovits' proposal; therefore, it is subject to the same criticisms. It also relies on subjective ratings of subject performance without recognizing the structured nature of conversational acts. Moreover, Savignon's experiment is geared to beginning level students; it aims at discriminating among degrees of communicative ability at the grossest level. Applying such criteria to our data, almost all the students would have to be assigned the highest rank on the six-point scale. This is not surprising for they all had learned English through the type of real-life activities that Savignon was trying to recreate in the foreign language classroom. This does not mean, however, that all our students communicate with equal effectiveness; it simply means that Savignon's subjective measures are not delicate enough to distinguish between the coping and groping of our urban students.

All the tests of "communicative competence" thus far developed suffer from a few recurring faults which may lead to a misleading picture of a learner's communicative ability. For example, if a time limit is placed on the length of conversation what may be measured is communicative effectiveness in the "warm up" period of conversation only. In our data we found that in general at the start of the conversation the students spoke a lot less (answered questions with single word utterances or nodded their heads) than towards the end. A test

which lasts only four minutes, (Savignon, 1972), may not measure anything more than communicative performance in the "warm up" period. In some of the measures discussed, the distribution of turns is specified in advance. This is something which never happens in informal conversation, which allows for a great deal of give and take between the participants. Having the students discuss an assigned topic without any apparent reason or motivation for such a discussion, again, is something which is not representative of authentic communication. Furthermore, the fact that these measures are in reality tests (and everyone knows it), renders them examples of pseudo-communication. If the students know they are being tested, they may very well assume the role of examinees: giving information, showing how much they know rather than communicating what they think. All of this contributes to the artificiality of such measures. A way must be found to analyze and measure communicative effectiveness in conversation.

Measuring Communicative Effectiveness in Conversation. It was felt that since the students we wanted to use in our study seemed able to perform all the activities listed by Jakobovits (1970), since Savignon's (1972) subjective scales fail to discriminate above a certain level of communicative ability, and since in general all the proposed tests were found to be measuring communication under artificial conditions,

the only alternative was to find a new fine-grained measure of communicative effectiveness. Work in discourse analysis, which studies conversation in its natural state, has shown that conversation is highly structured, that there are definite means for initiating, carrying on, and ending conversation (Schegloff, 1968; Sinclair and Coulthart, 1975); for taking turns at talking (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974; Keller-Cohen, 1979); for making repairs and corrections (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977), etc. Conversation has also been analyzed in terms of the function that utterances fulfill (Dore, 1977, 1979; Martin 1979). Thus it was felt that if the advances made in conversational analysis could be marshalled, it might be possible to quantify communicative effectiveness under genuine communicative conditions.

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) were among the first to perform a functional analysis of discourse. They examined teacher-student interaction in the classroom, a setting where the topic is under the teacher's control, questions cannot generally be avoided, and the chances of ambiguity are reduced. Under these conditions it was possible to seek answers to the following questions: "What function does a given utterance have--is it a statement, question, command, or response--and how and by whom are topics introduced and how are they developed; how are 'turns' to speak distributed and do speakers have differing rights to speak?" (Sinclair and

Coulthard, 1975:1). Taking cognizance of the work of Hymes, Halliday, Austin, and Searle, Sinclair and Coulthard developed a system for analysing the function of utterances in discourse.

In their system, discourse is seen as a hierarchical system going from the lowest level units--acts, to moves, to exchanges, to transactions, and finally to lessons, the highest unit in their system of analysis. Their discussion of acts is most relevant to the present study. Sinclair and Coulthard identify twenty-two distinct speech acts (pp. 40-44). Some of these acts seem to be peculiar to the classroom and would in all likelihood not occur elsewhere. More importantly, classroom discourse (especially, it seems, in Great Britain) is such that most of the talking is done by the teacher who lectures, asks questions, and comments upon responses. It is certainly not typical of interpersonal conversational interaction for one of the participants to dominate a conversation as much as a teacher dominates his class. But this is precisely the reason why classroom language had been chosen for analysis: the structure and stability of such talk makes it more amenable to scientific scrutiny. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975:117) recognize the difficulties in making the transition between the classroom and other forms of discourse, including one-on-one interviews, but they only provide a brief sketch of what form such an analysis should take.

Martin (1979) proposed an analysis of conversational acts based largely on Halliday's (1976) analysis of mood. Seventeen speech acts are established on the basis of an analysis of conversational adjacency pairs from an educational film ("Talking Shop: Demands on Language") made by Film Australia in conjunction with the Department of Linguistics, University of Sydney. Martin's system seems best suited to short conversational exchanges, i.e., adjacency pairs. However, other insights on determining conversational act type are gained from Martin's analysis. These will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter V.

Dore (1977, 1979) developed a system for analyzing the conversational organization of nursery school talk. Dore's system is based by and large on speech act theory, more specifically, on the work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Speech act theory recognizes that when we utter a sentence, our intentions (or the message we want to convey) may be expressed through a variety of grammatical forms. That is, in language use there is no necessary one-to-one correspondence between form and function. Dore's system of coding consists of 35 individual conversational acts which are grouped into four major act categories--Requestives, Assertives, Responsives, and Organizational Devices. It is these four categories, with some modifications and additions, that form the basis for our analysis of communicative effectiveness in conversation.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Generally speaking ESL learners have less trouble speaking to people they know than to people they do not know; they communicate more successfully in face to face interactions than in other situations, for example, on the telephone.

[2] There will be a more extensive discussion of repair in Chapter V; see also Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977).

[3] The term "communicative competence" will not be used here since it has been overused and misused all too often, and it is laced with socio-cultural connotations (Hymes, 1972; Gumperz, 1964) which may not even come into play here. We use the term communicative effectiveness to refer to a second language learner's ability to get his message across in one social context, under one set of conditions, with one interlocutor. It could happen that under different circumstances, the results could also be different.

[4] Savignon's findings may be best summed up as: Students generally learn what they practice. The students in the experimental group who had been given the opportunity to use French for communication, learned to communicate and thus the measures of communicative ability reflected this learning. Those who went to the language laboratory or who discussed French topics in English did little communicating in French, and as a result did poorly on the communicative measures. One test that Savignon failed to include in her test battery was a structure test. It would have been interesting to see whether those students who used the language laboratory also learned what they had practiced--grammar.

Chapter II

METHODS

Data Collection. Conversations between the investigator and native speakers of the Cantonese dialect of Chinese were tape-recorded during regularly scheduled conferences required as part of a college-level English as a second language course they were enrolled in. The atmosphere was relaxed and the students were given the opportunity to express themselves freely. At the beginning of the term, students in the investigator's class were asked to participate in the project. They were told that the object of the research was to see how they talked and wrote so as to improve future instruction. Most of the students in three of the investigator's classes agreed and signed consent forms permitting him to record conversations with them and to use those recordings for research purposes. They were assured that they would not be identified and that tape recordings and transcripts of their conversations would not be circulated.

The participants in this study were nine female native speakers of the Cantonese dialect of Chinese who were all born

in Hong Kong. At the time of the study, they ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-three and had lived in the United States from three to fourteen years. Six of the students lived in New York's Chinatown. One lived in midtown Manhattan, one in Brooklyn, and one in Queens. They all lived at home with their parents and the home language was Chinese. Their parents spoke little or no English. Those who had been old enough to attend school in Hong Kong may have had some formal instruction in English, but English was taught by teachers who themselves did not speak it very well. For all practical purposes, when they arrived in the United States, they could not communicate in English. When they went to school in New York City, they were placed in classes with English-speaking students and forced to sink or swim. In general, they had very little formal instruction in English, and some had content subjects in bilingual Chinese-English classes. These students had learned enough English to graduate from high school and to take regular college courses at one of the units of the City University of New York. Only females were chosen for this study because they represented the desired age and residency characteristics.

The conversations were tape-recorded in a private faculty office, with the investigator sitting at his desk and the students sitting at the side of the desk. A tape recorder was placed inside the desk drawer and an open microphone

was placed on a book shelf above the desk. Previous recordings of conversations in the same office proved that to be the most effective set-up for good acoustic quality. The tape-recorder was turned on via a remote switch as the students entered the room. They had been told earlier that only some of them would be recorded, so they did not know whether the tape-recorder was on or not. The same interview procedure was followed with all other students in the interviewer's classes. Similar conferences had been held the previous semester, some of which had been taped and transcribed.

It was thought that these conferences would be representative of the kinds of conversations that take place between ESL students and their teachers, and perhaps other sympathetic interlocutors, and that some of the experimental difficulties cited by Campbell, Gaskill, and Brook (1977) could be avoided. This format avoids the unnaturalness of experimental conditions where subjects and interviewers are told to ask or answer questions, talk about pictures, or talk on assigned topics, with no apparent purpose. In real-life situations when people communicate, they generally have a reason for doing so. Otherwise, what results is phatic communication, as between strangers who find themselves in one place, or between casual acquaintances who meet by chance and have nothing to say to each other. We wanted something a bit more genuine than that.

The interviews began with talk about incidental matters --how they liked college, how long they had been there, their other courses and teachers, their plans for the future, etc. When small talk was exhausted, the interviewer turned to a list of eleven topics about the student's native language, place of birth, first study of English, bilingual and ESL programs in high school, speaking English at home and with friends, attendance in tutorials, etc. In general, questions based on these topics initiated series of exchanges, contributed to by both student and teacher, on ancillary topics. In these transactions most students volunteered unsolicited information and asked questions. The investigator jotted down cryptic notes on the answers to questions on the above set of topics. The data solicited by the questionnaire were to be used for a separate report the investigator was preparing on curricular revision at the College, so there was interest in getting accurate information.

The interviewer's role as teacher, investigator, as well as participant put him in the unique position of being able to say, while doing the analysis later, exactly what he intended in making an utterance, how he understood an utterance, what he thought when he misunderstood an utterance, etc. These are valuable insights which are unavailable under different conditions and which can contribute to the resolution of apparently equivocal or anomalous utterances. Rough

transcripts of each interview were made the same day or a day or two later to ensure that as much as possible of the contextual information would be fresh in memory. The interviews were conducted over a two week period.

It was expected that the conversations would last approximately fifteen minutes each. However, there was a great deal of variation in length from ten to over twenty minutes. This is in accord with the observation of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) that the length of conversation is not specified in advance. This can be interpreted as evidence that the interviews were not artificial, i.e., the participants said what they wanted to say and did not feel compelled to continue talking until the time ran out, nor were they forced to halt their conversation when the time expired. Such variation may present problems for data analysis, but it can be taken as an indication that the conversations were indeed genuine and representative of teacher-student talk. It was felt that conversational naturalness and insight should take precedence over experimental rigor.

The conversations were transcribed using conventional spelling. It was only when pronunciation (or mispronunciation) led to conversational difficulties that phonetic transcription was used. Following Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), // indicates overlapping and = indicates 'latching' between the talk of two speakers, i.e., no interval.

Measures of Grammatical Knowledge. Four tests[1] were given to measure grammatical knowledge: a cloze test (50 items), a dictation (297 words), and the structure (75 items) and vocabulary (75 items) subparts of the Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT), forms S-A and V-A. The dictation, structure, and vocabulary tests were administered at the end of the term. The cloze test was administered shortly after the interviews were taped at the beginning of the term.

The cloze test was taken from Oller, Hudson, and Liu (1977:24). The students were given an entire fifty minute period to complete it. They were instructed to read over the entire passage before writing anything down, and they were encouraged to answer all questions, and when they were uncertain to guess. It was scored using the acceptable word method (see Oller, 1973).

The dictation was a 297 word passage from a low intermediate ESL reader (Pimsleur and Berger, 1974:8-11). First the entire passage was read from beginning to end at slightly slower than normal speed. Then it was read again with pauses at natural boundaries (mainly clause and phrase boundaries) to give the students a chance to write down what they heard. Each clause or phrase was read twice. Finally, the whole passage was read again from beginning to end. The students were given a chance to read over what they had written and to make corrections at the end. It was scored

by counting the number of correct words. Misspelled words were counted as correct. The scores were then converted to percentages.

It is assumed that in doing these tests, the learners are tapping their knowledge of English grammar, or perhaps more accurately, their knowledge of the grammar of their interlanguage. The large number of items on these tests should ensure that we get an accurate sample of what the learners know. The authors of the CELT tests report that American high school students received extremely high scores on these tests. Our cloze test was given to two native speakers of English both of whom got over 90% of the items correct using the exact word scoring method. There was no reason to think that native speakers would not do as well on the dictation. Since native speakers of English get excellent scores on these tests, these tests can be assumed to be measuring a fundamental type of knowledge of English grammar. Therefore, the scores second language learners achieve should represent the distance of their interlanguage grammars from target language norms.

In addition, we analyzed the actual speech of the learners in the interviews to determine the proportion of error-free conversational acts each learner produced. This measure should reflect the learners' grammatical knowledge, independent of their reading or writing ability.

Coding Procedures. All the transcripts were coded by the investigator with constant reference to the audio tapes. Then to ensure consistency and accuracy, two transcripts were selected for coding by two experienced teachers of English as a second language. They were given coding instructions with sample pages from each of the transcripts (Appendix A and B). Then they were asked to code the two transcripts independently. As expected, the agreement rate between the two coders and the investigator was well over 90%.

FOOTNOTE

[1] These tests will be discussed more extensively in Chapter VII. The term "grammatical knowledge" is used here in the linguistic sense, representing knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology, semantics, etc.

Chapter III

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES, SOCIETY, AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Sources of Linguistic Input. Language learning is often distinguished on the basis of where it takes place--in one's own country (foreign language learning) or in a country where the target language is spoken (second language learning). Numerous observers report that when one learns a foreign language formally in the classroom, with no opportunity to communicate in that language, one learns the formal grammar rules, the dialogues, the exercises, and so on, but one generally fails to acquire communicative facility in that language (Savignon, 1972). On the other hand, in a naturalistic language learning situation,[1] where the language is learned through actual use with little or no formal instruction, some ability to communicate is acquired, but grammatical accuracy may be lacking (Schumann, 1978).

All the students in this study, except one, had their first contact with English in Hong Kong under foreign language learning conditions. That instruction, however, seems to have had little impact. The picture that emerges of English

language instruction in the schools these students attended may explain why. Perhaps it might be more accurate to say "English traditional grammar" instruction because, from what the students report, it is clear that they were not learning English but about English. The approach seems to be grammar-translation, if it can be called that, with a focus on vocabulary, taught by teachers apparently with no training in language teaching methodology, and who in many cases did not speak the language themselves.[2] Descriptions like the following are typical: "...they translate in Chinese, but you know, we never speak English in class...and they don't tell you how to read the words." (N, p. 24). "They also have English course. It's very simple English. It's like simple word: 'a boy', 'woman', or like A, B, C....even though the teacher is English teacher, but you know, he explain to us the lesson and he speak Chinese. That's why we don't have practice." (G, pp. 17-18). It is little wonder that almost nothing was learned. When they arrived in the United States, they could not communicate in English. Four received no English as a second language instruction at all, three were given a period of ESL in "pull-out' classes, one a half period, and one was put into an ESL class three years after her arrival in the United States. Thus, given the limited amount and questionable quality of ESL instruction, it can be assumed that the bulk of their English input came from informal

settings, i.e., where the language was not being taught for its own sake.

There are five major sources of informal English input to the learners: teachers, peers, siblings, merchants and passive exposure through the electronic media. The major source of contact with and input of English were the teachers the students had in New York City public schools. All the students had been required to take a regular academic program and most of their courses were conducted in English, although in some classes there were bilingual aides who translated to the Chinese students what the teacher said in English, and some students had certain subjects in bilingual classes, where both languages were used. Nonetheless, a substancial portion of the school day was occupied sitting in classes where English was the medium of instruction.

The students living in Chinatown had few opportunities to interact with English-speaking peers in or after school. The vast majority of students in the area schools were either American-born Chinese or Chinese immigrants. The native speakers of English were by and large speakers of non-standard dialects.

All the students who had siblings living with them at home reported speaking English to them part of the time. Although some practice is better than no practice, the quality of English communication is questionable. Assuming their

siblings to be at about the same level of English proficiency as our students, such practice, although communicative, may only have created conditions favorable to fossilization of deviant forms.

In Chinatown, as in many other ethnic enclaves, English is almost a superfluous language. Most of the people live and work right in the neighborhood. Five of the students said that their parents neither spoke nor understood any English. Three said their parents' knowledge of English was poor. Only one said her parents were very good at speaking English. Our students report that the only time that they really had to use English was in business transactions outside of Chinatown, with government officials, in school, etc.

Limited opportunities to use English, combined with certain socio-cultural attitudes and circumstances, make for a poor language learning environment. Although the students reported that they sometimes spoke English at home, their parents disapproved of it, preferring them to speak Chinese. Furthermore, living in Chinatown exerted pressure on speaking the traditional language and afforded few opportunities to interact with native speakers of English. It appears that the models available may have been speakers who themselves spoke interlanguage varieties of English or non-standard dialects. The schools were one of the few places where our students had been exposed to considerable amounts of English,

but because most of their classmates were also Chinese, the major source of English were the teachers. The teachers, however, after many years of contact with such students, it would appear, had learned to comprehend and perhaps speak the interlanguage of their students: One student reported that she was thoroughly surprised that her psychology professor (a new faculty member at the College) could not understand a question she had asked in class, even though she had made a few attempts at clarifying it, until one of her fellow students interpreted for her. This student commented that when she was in high school, she had never had any difficulty communicating with her teachers and felt she spoke English as well as anyone.[3]

Use of Conversation by the Learner. The above are the kinds of conditions Schumann (1976) says lead to pidginization, where a reduced linguistic system functions as a tool for conveying referential information. Social and psychological distance are said to be responsible for pidginization.

> Social distance pertains to the individual as a member of a social group which is in contact with another social group whose members speak a different language. Hence social distance involves such sociological factors as domination versus subordination, assimilation versus acculturation versus preservation, enclosure, size, congruence and attitude. Psychological distance pertains to the individual as an individual, and involves such psychological factors as resolution of language shock, culture shock and culture stress, integrative versus instrumental motivation and ego-permeability. (Schumann, 1976:396)

Schumann hypothesizes that the greater the social and psychological distance, the more difficult it will be for a learner to acquire a second language.

Although social and psychological distance play a role in pidginization, it will be argued here that they are only two of many factors which have an impact on success or failure in second language acquisition (see Selinker and Lamendella, 1980). One other factor which must be considered is individual communication strategies--that is, how learners use (or fail to use) conversation for the purpose of learning a language. The learner who uses conversation to her advantage will exploit the opportunities which arise to improve her grammar. In conversation, for example, there are mechanisms for making repairs (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977). Consider the following exchange:

(1) C: I have to do a demonation.
T: You have to do a demonstration?
C: Demonstra...
but I forgot to bring the something to show in the class. (p. 4)

Here the student uses a neologism "demonation" which the teacher interprets as the word "demonstration." He interrupts her turn by repeating her utterance with a correction, thus asking for a confirmation of his understanding. She indicates that his interpretation is the intended one by

repeating the key word. The interesting and significant thing about the way this student agrees with the teacher's confirmation is that she repeats the crucial word. She could have just as well said "Yeah" and gone on her merry way. It is also interesting that in repeating the word she only repeats part of it, "demonstra"; she stops after the crucial point where the error had occured, and then hurries back to finish the sentence in the middle of which she had been interrupted. This scenario might suggest that this learner is conscious of both conversational as well as grammatical rules.

Other learners concentrate so much on conversation, on getting their messages across, that they brush aside opportunities for improving their grammars. For example:

(2) G: When I read the book, I understand the book, what's, what they talking about=

T: =What it says?=

G: =but when I'm reading, maybe sometime=

T: =Yeah.

G: I read a word is different, not right. The sound is not right.

T: Oh, you pronounce it wrong.

G: Oh, yeah. Pronounce. (p. 6)

In the first move above, the student uses circumlocution, groping for a way to express her ideas, so the teacher paraphrases her intended meaning to make sure that his understanding is correct and to provide a repair model. This student, however, ignores the teacher's repair initiation and continues trying to communicate her ideas. She fails to agree or disagree with the teacher's paraphrase, but this does not in any way impede the flow of conversation. The fact that she continues her turn immediately after the teacher's interruption demonstrates lack of disagreement, which is interpreted as tacit agreement. The use of circumlocution in her next move again causes the teacher to paraphrase her utterances, "Oh, you pronounce it wrong." This time, however, she responds by repeating the word "pronounce," which conveys her intended meaning. But she repeats this word without the sentence in which it was used. She could have repeated the teacher's paraphrase as "pronounce wrong" which would indicate that she may have learned a synonym for "not right." She could have also repeated it as "pronounce it wrong" which would indicate that she may have learned that the word "pronounce" takes a direct object. But she did none of these things. This is perhaps why, despite her overwhelming willingness to communicate in English and improve her social position, she is making little progress in learning grammar (see Chapter VIII for further discussion).

Schumann (1976) suggests that in order to become marked as a member of a particular social group, a person must acquire that group's speech features.[4] Some apparently integratively oriented learners in this study, for example G, seem to be following a slightly different rule: One becomes a member of a particular group when one is able to communicate with members of that group. For G, communication takes precedence over identity of expression, despite the fact that G wants to integrate into the target language society.[5] Although some elements of social distance may be working against her, these elements are the same, if not greater, for the other learners, who appear to be much less highly motivated, yet much more successful at learning English. Therefore, her relatively poor acquisition of English cannot be laid at the doorstep of social distance.[6]

FOOTNOTES

[1] Felix (1981), however, found that in terms of the acquisition of linguistic structures both naturalistic and formal learners followed similar strategies.

[2] In Hong Kong in order to qualify as a teacher of English, a candidate need only attain grade E (the lowest possible passing grade) on the English section of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination or the Hong Kong Chinese School Certificate (Law of Hong Kong: Education Ordinance. Hong Kong: The Government Printer, 1971).

[3] From this incident it can be supposed that throughout all the years in public school, her speech had probably never been corrected. This can be said with some degree of assurance since this student had never had any ESL classes. In a language class, correction is an accepted procedure, but in a literature or math class, correction of grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary can be taken as an assult on an individual's worth and integrity (cf. Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977).

[4] Schuman (1976) makes a claim, which follows from his pidginization hypothesis, that certain grammatical features may be superflous for certain second language learners: "That is, his speech contains those features (such as correct noun and verb inflections, inversion in questions, and correct placement of the negative particle) that are unnecessary for simple referential communication, but which are necessary to sound like a member of the group whose language contains these features" (Schumann, 1976:394, emphasis added). This claim is simply false. Grammatical markers may appear to be unnecessary from an analysis of the propositional structure of speech because they add a measure of redundancy, without altering the propositional structure, but they fulfill an integral communicative function. We can say:

(1) I bought five book

and be perfectly well understood without the plural morpheme /s/ because in this case it duplicates semantic information available in the word "five." It adds a layer of redundancy to language. Grammatical redundancy, however, often serves as a fail-safe device in conversation, where we do not have

the luxury of replaying a tape twenty times to decipher what the speaker meant to say. Suppose speaker A says (2) to speaker B while eating a tunafish sandwich so the "xxxxx" sounds something like "nive" or "vive."

(2) I bought xxxxx books

Given the plural morpheme on "books," speaker B would immediately have a clue that the unintelligible word must be a number. Combined with phonological information, the range of possibilities is narrowed to two words: "five" and "nine."

> "Redundancy" may be said to be due to an additional set of rules, whereby it becomes increasingly difficult to make an undetectable mistake. The term therefore is rather a misnomer, for it may be a valuable property of a source of information. If a source has zero redundancy, then any errors in transmission and reception owing to disturbances or noise, will cause the receiver to make an unidentifiable mistake (Cherry, 1957:185).

5 We make this statement on the basis of the following evidence: First, she is going to college which indicates that she wants an occupation different from her parents. Second, she left a higher paying job in her neighborhood to work at the College. Third, she says she wants to make friends with English speakers. Fourth, she says that she genuinely wants to learn English.

6 In Schumann's (1978) study, the subject who showed little or no learning of English ranked near the top of a social distance scale: "He seemed to have a positive attitude and good motivation, and hence little psychological distance" (p. 97). However, Schumann dismisses this inconsistency with his theory, claiming that his subject was not "entirely candid in his answers." Lack of candor is a danger faced by all researchers relying on self-reports. That is why we found it preferable to put more credence in what people actually do than what they say.

Chapter IV

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Before we can attempt to measure the communicative effectiveness of ESL learners, we have to examine the nature of communication in general and analyze its component parts. If we accept the definition of communication as the exchange of messages between individuals through a common system of symbols, then effective communication must be the same process accomplished with the fewest possible obstacles, interruptions, and misunderstandings. It is probably wrong to think of effective communication in absolute terms, for there are so many factors involved so that what may be effective under one set of circumstances may not be so under another; what may work with one person may not with another. But there are certain characteristics which combined provide a measure of communicative success. As we have seen in Chapter I, there have been many definitions of effective communication but few objective means to quantify it. We now propose our own operational definition and put forth a tentative measure of communicative effectiveness for conversations between native speakers and non-native speakers of a language. Effective communication

can been seen as a combination of how much information is conveyed tempered by how well it is comprehended by the interlocutor.

In interpersonal communication there are so many diverse factors involved that even under the best of circumstances, in conversations between speakers who share a common language and culture, things are bound to go awry. In cross-linguistic, cross-cultural interaction many more opportunities arise for misunderstanding. Ours is a cross-linguistic study so communicative difficulties should not be unexpected.

Communication theorists (Shannon and Weaver, 1949; Berlo, 1960) put a great deal of emphasis on the twin concepts of fidelity and noise. Fidelity includes all those elements that make communication more effective, while those elements that make it less effective are called noise. According to Berlo there are four factors which foster either fidelity or noise; they are the speaker/hearers' communication skills, their attitudes, their knowledge, and their position in the sociocultural system. If attitudes, knowledge, and position in the sociocultural system remain more or less constant, then any differences in communicative success can be attributed to variation in individual communication skills. These conditions obtain when a relatively homogenous group is studied, whose members come from the same geographical area, have had

similar upbringings and educations, and who are members of families adhering to traditional values. Furthermore, if the conversations under study center on aspects of personal experience, successful participation does not require any esoteric knowledge which would impede conversational exchange. Under such circumstances, the only factor that can significantly contribute to conversational fidelity or noise is the participants' communication skills.

Communication skills, among other things, include an adequate vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. "The linguistic facility of a communication source is an important factor in the communication process. As sources of communication, we are limited in our ability to express our purposes if we do not have the communication skills necessary to encode accurate messages" (Berlo, 1960:45). For this reason we hypothesized originally that there would be a relationship between a student's grammatical knowledge and his communicative ability. However, it appears that inadequate knowledge of the code (i.e., the grammar of the language) can be compensated for by other skills pertinent to conversation. "In speaking we need to know...how to gesture, how to interpret the message we get from our listeners, and how to alter our own messages as we go along" (Berlo, 1960:42). Messages, in addition to the code (the structure of the language) and content (the meaning), have message treatment. "We can define

the treatment of a message as the decisions which the communication source makes in selecting and arranging both codes and content" (Berlo, 1960:60). Native speakers have many options in the way they treat their messages because they have the full array of their language and culture to draw upon. Non-native speakers, depending on their proficiency, may be much more limited in the options available to them in expressing their messages. Thus a limited code may also have a limiting impact on the content of their messages.

The listener is another significant variable in the decisions that speakers make in message treatment. In order to make messages understandable to the listener, the speaker has to make predictions about him--what he knows, what he expects, what he will comprehend. In other words, the speaker has to show a certain measure of empathy if his message is to be transmitted successfully to the listener. Learners unable to make accurate predictions about their interlocutors, because of linguistic and/or cultural differences may encounter roadblocks to communication. Developing empathy in the target language and culture is a prerequisite for successful communication in that language.

Communication can take place at a number of different levels (Berlo, 1960). One level is the sender-receiver level,

where one person talks and the other person listens, e.g., a speech. The second level is the action-reaction, where one party asks questions and the other party gives answers, as under cross-examination in court. The third level is interaction, where both parties take turns asking questions, responding, and commenting on each other's messages. The last level is of course the aim of interpersonal communication. When second language learners become indistinguishable from native speakers at this level, they can be said to have truly acquired the target language.

Intermediate and advanced learners should be capable of participating in the three types of communication discussed above. They should all be able to operate at the first level very well indeed, i.e., act as successful receivers. The majority should also have little trouble at the second level, i.e., responding to questions. However, not all learners may be equally able to make the transition from action-reaction to interaction. To make the transition, a learner must be able to reverse roles--ask questions, solicit repairs, provide unsolicited information--in short, do all those things native speakers do in interactional communication.

In an interview setting, not many opportunities arise for the interviewee to ask questions and a sensitive, experienced interviewer will strive to make his intentions clear, thus minimizing opportunities for repair initiations by the interviewee. The area where the interviewee has the greatest

latitude is in the amount of talk he contributes. In this regard, communication can be compared to generosity. If potential donors of equal means to some charitable cause are asked to contribute $10 each, and one gives nothing, one gives $10, and a third gives the suggested $10 plus an extra $100, it can be said that the first is least generous while the last is most generous. The second is in the middle, giving what is requested of him, but no more. Similarly, in responding to questions, an interviewee can choose not to say anything; he can provide the information requested, or he can provide the requested information and then volunteer additional facts or opinions. Just as the person who donates to charity more than is requested would appear to be more generous than the other two, the person who provides more information than is requested would also appear to be communicating more than the others. One way of deciding who is communicating more is by considering the length of his turn. By taking the average length of turn for each individual, we can compare the relative amount of information conveyed by each.

But communicating more does not necessarily mean communicating better or more effectively. It is not clear what is the appropriate amount of information that should be conveyed in order to make a speaker's communication effective. In one instance a single word may do; in another a lengthy discourse may not suffice. Communication is affected by a

host of linguistic, environmental, and social factors, so that it would be inappropriate to set up absolute standards for amount of communication. If, however, the environmental and social factors remain constant, any variation among the students can be attributed to individual differences in communicative skills. Effective communication depends not only on how much a speaker communicates but also on how well the interlocutor understands him. To be understood, a speaker must be sensitive to the needs of the listener. For the non-native, it may mean recognizing the limitations of his pronunciation, syntax, and vocabulary and the difficulties these limitations may present for the listener.

A person who talks without regard to whether he is understood or not, who talks on esoteric topics, or in whose speech there is a lot of noise due to ineffective control of the grammar will be less successful at communicating than a person who takes care to avoid the above difficulties and tries to tune in to the interlocutor.

In conversations between native speakers and non-native speakers of a language, the burden of countinuing the conversation can become one sided:

> To continue the conversation, the native speaker uses a number of "making it easier" strategies. Among them are changing wh-questions to yes/no questions so the learner need not say much more than yes or no. Another technique is asking a question and posing a number of

> suggested answers (What did you see, a sailboat? What is it a pizza? a buritto? a taco?). Sometimes conversations take on a charades quality, with the native speaker doing both sides of the conversation, guessing what it is the learner wishes to say and modeling it for him (Hatch and Long, 1980:34).

It can be assumed that the more effective communicators would need less of this type of help from their interlocutor than would those of lower communicative ability.

Communication can be analyzed through a monadic approach (looking at the performance of one of the participants) or a dyadic approach (looking at the interaction between participants. The one measure of communicative success that we have discussed above is turn length; it is monadic measure because it looks at the average number of conversational acts that the student produces per turn, and it is the conversational performance of the learner that we are most interested in. A dyadic measure recognizes the importance of the interlocutor in helping make conversation succeed or fail. Researchers in second language acquisition focusing on "foreign talk" and "communication strategies" "emphasize the interactional nature of human communication and stress the importance of including the interlocutor's input in descriptions of learners' use of their interlanguage" (Tarone 1980:417). We consider the interviewer's contribution in terms of repair initiations, that is, how often he has to ask for confirmation or clarification of the learner's utterances. Repair initiations are important because they are

indicative of how well the learner is making himself understood, how well he is able to judge what the listerner will be able to decode and his ability to minimize the listener's efforts to comprehend his message, and how well he recognizes the listener's feedback and alters subsequent messages to accomodate the listerner. Recognizing the dyadic nature of conversational interaction, it can be assumed that the learner with whom the interlocutor has to use few repair initiations to comprehend the intended meaning is communicating more successfully than the learner whose interlocutor has to resort to repair initiations more frequently.

Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977) provide a comprehensive discussion of the "organization of repair" in conversation, focusing on who initiates the repair and who actually makes the repair. However, they do not provide a taxonomy of "repairables" or "trouble sources." One potential source of repairables is errors in grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation, but as Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977:363) point out: "Hearable error does not necessarily yield the occurence of repair/correction." Errors, though, are easily identifiable in terms of structural deviations from well-defined norms. Therefore, when two persons are really trying to exchange ideas, repair initiations usually occur when the indended meaning of an utterance is obscured and the repair is necessary to clarify the message. Furthermore,

Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks state: "Repair/correction is sometimes found where there is no hearable error, mistake, or fault" (p. 363). Judging from the examples they cite, which are taken out of context, this would appear to be so. However, if the larger context were taken into account, many of the apparently unmotivated repairs could probably be attributed to difficulties stemming from if not structural errors, than violations of discourse principles, such as those set forth by Grice (1975). Grice's "Cooperative Principle" ("Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged") also operates in conversations between native speakers and non-native speakers of a language. The Cooperative Principle has four sub-maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner.

QUANTITY: Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange.
Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

QUALITY: Do not say what you believe to be false.
Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

RELATION: Be relevant.

MANNER: Avoid obscurity of expression
Avoid ambiguity.
Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
Be orderly. (Grice, 1975:67).

It is by following maxims such as the above that we maximize the

effective exchange of information. Violations of any of these will create problems. This is true for both native speakers and learners of a second language. However, non-natives run into difficulties with some of these more often than with others. For example, the quantity maxim puts demands on learners which they may not be ready to meet, for in order to make one's contribution convey just the right amount of information, one must have some idea of what the listener knows and what is new to him. Native speakers of a language share a pool of common knowledge; if they live in the same city, they share knowledge which may not be available to residents of a different locale; if they are friends, they have knowledge about each other's personalities, habits, and experiences.

> When two human beings confront each other, and communicate via language, paralinguistic signals, kinesics, and so on, it is probably safe to assume that they never completely share their communicative conventions, although they always share some of them. For each individual is but an excerpt of his culture and no two excerpts are identical (Pittenger, Hockett, and Danehy, 1976:92).

When two people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds have to communicate in the language of one of them, they may find it difficult to be informative because they can never be sure of what the other person knows and what is new to him; in other words, they may lack a common base of shared knowledge. However, "there is only a quantitative difference between intracultural and cross-cultural relations.

The problems of cross-cultural communication are those of intracultural communication writ large" (Pittenger, Hockett, and Danehy, 1976:92). This is why perhaps, communication between native speakers and non-native speakers so often requires repairs. It can, therefore, be said that as a non-native speaker of a language acquires the information base of native speakers of the target language, his communication will become more effective, necessitating fewer repairs from native speakers. Conversely, the less information that is shared by the interlocutors, the more difficult it will be to communicate successfully. The speaker will provide either too little or too much information. In either case, effective communication is impaired.

Satisfying the quality maxim, i.e., truthfulness, does not depend on knowledge of grammar or discourse in any particular language; we, therefore, do not expect any excessive difficulties to stem from it for second language learners.

The relevancy maxim, on the other hand, may pose serious problems for second language learners, especially those at lower levels of proficiency. Not having complete control of the target language, it may not always be possible for the learner to make his utterances appropriate to his interlocutor's. One would expect serious problems to arise from the lack of concord between the utterances of two conversational partners, thus necessitating repairs and extended

negotiations for the intended meaning. The problem is compounded by the fact that second language learners often are not even aware of the mismatch between what they say and what is expected of them in a situation.

> Native speakers sometimes make production errors, which are usually immediately self-corrected. Second language learners may make phonological, lexical, or syntactic errors, which are not perceived as errors by the speaker and are not self-corrected. These may cause problems in understanding and can lead to complicated negotiations, sometimes even changing the direction of the topic, pivoting around the repair sequence (Schwartz, 1980:148).

Thus it happens that relevant utterances are sometimes taken to be irrelevant and irrelevant utterances are taken up and change the interactional direction of the conversation.

The manner maxim is another major trouble source for second language learners. It relates "not to what is said, but rather to how what is said is to be said" (Grice, 1975: 67). Not by choice or design, second language learners frequently appear to be unnecessarily obscure, because a concept or word which is common in their language may not be in the target language. Moreover, their utterances may appear ambiguous only because they may not be aware of the multiple meaning potential of their expressions. They may not know a word so their speech may appear to be unnecessarily prolix because of circumlocution. Their speech may appear to be disorganized because they are following the rhetorical patterns of their native language, or because of the lack of control of

the target language, they may be following a hit and miss strategy, lacking the clarity expected for effective communication.

Violations of the "Cooperative Principle" and its maxims lead to confusion on the part of the auditor, and in order to insure understanding, result in repair initiations and sometimes outright repairs or corrections.

The fundamental requirement of successful communication is to be able to transmit messages in a code understandable to others. Of course, there are many different codes, but the one we are concerned with here is spoken language in face to face interaction. A common code is a prerequisite for communication, and as we have seen above, effective communication requires, in addition a measure of mutual cooperation between the participants. "The behavior of the source does not occur independently of the behavior of the receiver or vice versa. In any communication situation, the source and the receiver are interdependent" (Berlo, 1960:106). Given the interdependence of the interlocutors, it follows that the effective communication of one can be gauged to some extent from the behavior of the other because of the constant feedback going back and forth. "Feedback provides the source with information concerning his success in accomplishing his objectives. In doing this, it exerts control over future messages which the source encodes (Berlo, 1960:111-112). For example, the Nielson ratings are a means for gauging the

feedback of a television audience to a particular program. One way of measuring success in communication is by analyzing the type of feedback that a speaker receives from his partner. If the feedback is of the type indicating understanding, then the speaker must be communicating effectively, but if it indicates that the hearer is having trouble following all of what the speaker says, his communication may not be so effective. That is, the learner who requires few repair initiations can be assumed to be approaching native speaker competence more closely than the learner who requires a great deal of assistance to get his message across. Although the organization of repair may take the same outline among both native and non-native speakers, the difference between the groups lies in the sheer quantity of such devices. It would certainly come as a surprise to most knowledgeable observers to find half of the utterances in a conversation between native speakers to be repair initiations, as is sometimes the case with some of non-native speakers. The other component of effective communication by non-native speakers is, as we have seen earlier, average turn length. The combination of Average Turn Length and Repair Initiations may tell us not only how much a second language learner participates in a conversation in comparison to other learners, but also how successful and effective that participation is in relation to the others. A more precise formula for measuring communicative effectiveness will be developed in Chapter VII.[1]

FOOTNOTE

[1] One limitation to this approach is that the results may hold only for conversations between second language learners and the same interviewer. Whether with other interviewers the same students would show similar results is a question open to further investigation.

Chapter V

CODING PRINCIPLES

The fundamental unit of analysis in this study is the conversational act, which may be defined as the smallest unit having a speech function (Martin, 1979b). It can be as short as a single word or as long as a sentence. What is important for this analysis is that an utterance in order to qualify as a conversational act must convey a proposition in the context of conversation. This requirement, however, does not mean that only full sentences will be considered conversational acts since, as is well known, propositions are frequently expressed in conversation through elliptical utterances (cf. Halliday and Hasan, 1976). The greatest problem for us, as we shall see below, is in delimiting conversational acts.

Conversation is often compared to the game of tennis, where two players take turns at striking a ball. If this analogy were perfect, there would be little difficulty in defining the basic units of analysis. That is, if in conversation the interlocutors each produced single alternating utterances, we could easily define a conversational act as initiating when a speaker begins to talk and ending when another speaker takes the floor. But conversation is a bit more

complicated than tennis. It can perhaps be more properly compared to billiards, where players take turns, but their turns may consist of more than one action. In conversation as in billiards, each participant in his turn may produce from zero to N units, but the difficulty in analyzing conversation, unlike billiards, arises in deciding where one unit ends and another begins.

In making coding decisions we relied on insights gained from the work of Dore (1977, 1979), Martin (1979a, 1979b), Labov and Fanshel (1977), Halliday and Hasan (1976), Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977), among others, and our own particular research interests, which sometimes took precedence over competing alternatives.

Our first decision was to code the data in terms of broad conversational act categories, rather than individual conversational acts, which had been proposed by previous reseachers. We decided to consider in our analysis only four major act categories: Requestives (RQ), Responsives (RS), Assertives (AS), and Repair Initiations (RP).[1] Finer differentiation was felt to be unnecessary and problematical, since we were concerned not with breaking new ground in conversational analysis, but in seeing how different individuals use conversation for learning a second language. These four major codes provide essential data for the analysis of conversations of second language learners. We want to know

whether every learner is capable of not only providing responses to questions, but whether he can also ask questions, make requests, ask for confirmation and clarification--perform the kinds of functions that native speakers routinely employ. This sort of information gives us a rudimentary picture of a learner's communicative ability in a second language.

Moreover, since ours is in part a quantitative analysis, we wanted to make coding decisions on the basis of explicit criteria to guarantee uniformity and consistency, and consequently to avoid the equivocality of finely differentiated conversational acts (Dore, 1979:4).[2] In preliminary coding attempts using some of the coding schemes discussed above, we found that frequently arbitrary decisions had to be made or utterances had to be assigned multiple codes. Furthermore, having a great many codes obscured many of the generalizations that could be made in a broader framework.

Identifying Conversational Acts. Utterances in surface structure may consist of a number of underlying sentences, but to analyze conversation in terms of underlying sentences would say little about the function of utterances in conversation. Martin (1979) proposed a number of criteria for deciding how speech should be segmented into units for analysis.

One way of segmenting the units of speech is by defining them in terms of what precedes or follows them--that is, in terms of adjacency pair relations (Martin, 1979a). This would be fine, as we have seen, if conversation consisted of alternating exchanges of single conversational acts. But a speaker's turn in conversation may consist of several related but distinct acts. To identify conversational acts in a series, Martin (1979b:16) proposed mood (In the traditional grammar sense, see Halliday and Hasan, 1976) as a criterion. Under this system, clauses independently selecting for mood are considered units of analysis; that is, clauses which are marked for mood are coded as independent conversational acts, while clauses which do not independently select for mood are considered part of other conversational acts. For example, "He smoke many years" appearing in the adjacency pair in (1)

(1) T: Did he smoke?

I: Yes,

He smoke many years. (p. 18)

is an independent conversational act but when the same clause appears in (2)

(2) I didn't know that he smoke many years.

it is not, because it does not select independently for mood. In (2) "He smoke many years" is part of a larger conversational act; it is not an independent conversational act because its

mood is determined by the matrix sentence. In our analysis an embedded sentence is not considered an independent conversational act because its matrix sentence is marked for mood and it determines conversational function. Therefore, the unit of analysis in this study will be any utterance or group of utterances that function as a conversational unit (i.e., select independently for mood), and when separated from accompanying utterances, those utterances too can function independently in the same context. In general, subordinate clauses will not be treated as independent conversational acts, while coordinate clauses will be coded as independent--more precisely, in Halliday and Hasan's (1976:234) terms, coordinate clauses which express an additive[3] relation are considered independent conversational acts.

Although utterances in conversation may be analyzed at several different levels--grammatical, illocutionary, interactional, in this research, as we have already said, we are concerned primarily with the illocutionary intent of utterances--whether they are Requestives, Responsives, Assertives, or Repair Initiations. These four act categories are very broad and each subsumes under it a number of finely differentiated acts. For example, our Assertive may refer to a promise, objection, report, etc. What is important for us is the role a given utterance plays in a conversational exchange.

Requestives include requests for information (questions) and requests for action (commands). Typically the response to a request for information is "Yes (Yeah)/No..."

(3) T: Did you have English in Hong Kong?

L: Yeah. (p. 16)

and to a request for action the response is "OK/No,..."

(4) T: You don't have to go there now.

N: OK. (p. 3)

After a requestive of either kind, some sort of response is expected from the interlocutor.

Responsives have the property of following Requestives; they depend on preceding utterances for their conversational function since they have no unique grammatical marking of their own. Structurally speaking, they are identical to Assertives, except that they frequently tend to be elliptical--omitting the redundant material in the question or command. Elliptical utterances which would in their full form select independently for mood are considered full-fledged conversational acts. They express a proposition which is "understood":

(5) T: You know, you speak very well for being here for four years.

E: Yeah, I know. (p. 6)

In this pair of acts, "Yeah, I know" is used elliptically to mean "Yeah, I know I speak very well."

Assertives usually correspond to declarative sentences in grammar. They may be subclassified as descriptions,

identifications, evaluations, explanations, and so on, but these subcategories are of less interest to us than the fact that Assertives generally express unsolicited propositions. In our coding we followed the following principle: If a propositional utterance could not be classified as a Requestive, Responsive, or Repair Initiation, it was considered an Assertive. Assertives in our analysis are, in effect, the unmarked major category.[4]

The notion of repair has been discussed extensively by Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977), who identify a multitude of repair types. In this research we will be concerned only with what they call "other-initiated repair," that is, repairs initiated by the interlocutor, not the speaker himself. We will be concerned with two major types of repair--Confirmation Requests and Clairification Questions. The Confirmation Request is a conversational act through which the hearer indicates that he has a tentative understanding of an utterance but he just wants to make sure that it is what the speaker intended (cf. Martin, 1979a:8). This can be done in one of three ways: repetition, paraphrase[5], or expansion of the speaker's utterance. In repetition, semantic content and syntactic structure are preserved, although deictic adjustment may be made, usually in personal pronouns:

(6) L: They didn't mail me a letter.

T: They didn't mail you a letter?

L: They suppose...I thought, they supposed to. (p. 25)

Paraphrase is used to sum up an idea the learner has expressed, usually through circumlocution. It involves syntactic changes, but semantic content is usually preserved:

(7) L: It's like English, you know.
You write it down too the way you speak, but it's not proper when you write what you say.

T: Uh huh.
so=

L: =So same thing as Cantonese.

T: You mean, you write Cantonese and Mandarin the same way, but you pronounce them differently?

L: Yeah. (pp. 15-16)

Expansion means that new semantic information is introduced. The hearer synthesizes what the speaker says with his general knowledge to produce a new proposition:

(8) N: I learn Spanish in nineth grade.
I start, you know, eight grade in here,
and they, you know, give me Spanish in nineth grade.

T: Yeah, as a second language?

N: Yeah. (pp. 25-26)

As we have seen above, Confirmation Requests may take the form of interrogative or declarative sentences. Labov (1972) provides an interpretive rule for deciding when a

declarative sentence is to be interpreted as a request for confirmation. In any conversation there are three types of knowledge: knowledge that A has (A-events), knowledge that B has (B-events), and knowledge shared by A and B (AB-events). "If A makes a statement about a B-event, it is heard as a request for confirmation" (Labov, 1972:124).

In this research we are concerned with what happens when a second language learner fails to understand or be understood by the interlocutor. In this regard the conversational act, in addition to Confirmation Request, that is significant for our analysis is the Clarification Question. As we have already seen, Confirmation is used when a hearer thinks he understands the speaker's intended meaning, but is not completely sure. The Clarification Question, on the other hand, is used when there is a much more serious lapse --when the hearer fails to comprehend the speaker's utterance:

(9) K: My neighbor we don't talk to.

T: Huh?

K: It's not Chinese, right? (p. 33)

Clarification Questions are also used when not enough information is provided to satisfy the hearer:

(10) T: What are you reading?

K: All my books.

T: Which books?

K: Like uh psychology and speech class and English book. (p. 2)

In our analysis, an interrogative form is coded as a Clarification Question if it relates back to a B-event already presented. It is coded as a Requestive (i.e., a question) if it requests new information. In this respect we differ with Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977:369) who suggest that queries involving single question words should all be treated as examples of other-initiated repair, even if such questions do not refer back to repairable utterances in prior turns.

In terms of illocutionary force, Confirmation Requests seem to be at the same time requests and responses:

> Overall Confirmations seem part way between an INITIATING and a RESPONDING act. They are commonly responded to themselves...whereas the potentially elliptical Responses to Statements, Questions, Commands, and Offers are not responded to as frequently. On the other hand, they cannot appear initially in text. They always depend by definition on the preceding act whose content they confirm. (Martin, 1979a:11)

Similarly, Clarification Questions may not appear initially in a text; they too depend on the preceding act. For these reasons both Confirmation Requests and Clarification Questions are classified, not as Requestives, Responsives or Assertives, but as Repair Initiations.

As we have seen earlier, to explain how conversations are maintained and how interlocutors correctly interpret one another's utterances, Grice (1975) proposed the Cooperative Principle which enjoins the conversation partners to be informative, relevant, truthful and clear. In our data repair

initiations tend to occur when one or more of the above maxims are violated. In conversations between native speakers and non-native speakers of a language, there are frequent lapses in comprehension by both parties. It therefore becomes necessary for the participants to "negotiate" for the intended meaning (Schwartz, 1980). In exchanging ideas, the interlocutors endeavor to establish that what is understood by A is indeed what is intended by B, and vice versa. Confirmation Requests and Clarification Questions are manifestations of this negotiation process. Although this form of negotiation occurs in conversations between native speakers, it is by no means as pervasive as it is between non-native speakers, and native speakers,or between two non-natives. It is reasonable, therefore, to expect that as a non-native speaker approaches native speaker competence the negotiating process should become less burdensome and fewer Repair Initiations of the sort discussed above should be necessary to reach agreement on the intended message.

Distinguishing Among Conversational Act Categories. Some of the same criteria that help us determine what is a conversational act will also help us distinguish among conversational acts. In determining conversational act type, we will consider three sorts of evidence: grammatical form, adjacency pair membership, and the broader context of the utterance. All these help determine the intended function of an utterance.

Of the four act categories only one has unique grammatical marking and this one is the Requestive. It is possible to distinguish Requestives from other conversational acts in structural terms through interrogative words, subject verb inversion, do-support, or intonation. Grammatical form, though, does not always guarantee perfect identification of Requestives since it is possible for a request to be made through the use of a non-requestive structure and interrogative form does not always mean that an utterance is a Requestive.

In addition to grammatical form, the speech function of a given utterance can be determined from its relationship to the utterances around it. If an utterance follows a question, it is more than likely that it is a Responsive. Martin (1979b) uses the notion of "adjacency pair" to identify a relationship between the utterances of two speakers. Such utterance pairs share a semantic relation which is frequently manifested syntactically as ellipsis of various sorts (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). Ellipsis is one of the criteria that signals an adjacency pair relationship.

We should keep in mind the fact that the analysis presented here is done at the level of act categories, not moves, exchanges or transactions. Conversational acts occur in real time; that is, one follows the other.[6] Thus it is possible to identify the function of conversational acts in terms of adjacent acts:

(11) A: What do you do? RQ

B: I'm a student. RS

In a conversation between A and B, "I'm a student" is preceded by a question so it functions as a response to the question; therefore, it is coded as a Responsive. If instead of a question, "I'm a student" had been preceded by another statement by B, as in (12)

(12) B: My name is Nina. AS

B: I'm a student. AS

then it would have to be coded as an Assertive because that is its function in relation to the preceding act. In English there is no overt grammatical marking to distinguish Assertives from Responsives. Although Responsives frequently tend to be elliptical, ellipsis is not a necessary condition for an act to qualify as a Responsive.

We have said that the function of an act is determined in relation to the adjacent act; however, there are times when pairs of acts may be interspersed parenthetically, for example:

(13) T: Did you have any ESL classes? RQ

N: In junior high school?= RP

T: =Yeah. RS

N: No. (p. 25) RS

Here a Repair sequence (Confirmation--Response) is interposed between a Requestive and a Responsive. The above

example illustrates that response turns do not always consist of single acts, but may be composed of a number of acts which precede or follow the actual Response act. A more common phenomenon is the case of a multiple-act response turn where only the first act serves the response function while other acts elaborate on the idea expressed, for example:

(14) T: How did you do on the composition in class today? RQ

N: I don't know. RS

I...First I wrote at home, AS

and I turn over, AS

and then today I wrote it in class. (p. 1) AS

These additional "optional" acts, although they may be part of a response move, are coded in our analysis as Assertives. "Where a move is made up of more than one act, the other acts are subsidiary to the one which is the head, and optional in the structure" (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975:36).

Coding all subsidiary acts in response turns as Assertives (i.e., if they cannot be coded as Requestives or Repair Initiations) may seem arbitrary, but is is a necessary step to assure consistency in coding. Moreover, it serves well our purpose of helping to determine which learner is communicating more effectively. That is, learners whose response turns to questions consist of single acts are separated from learners whose response turns consist of many conversational acts. The latter in the long run contribute much more

to the conversation than the former and this is one way for measuring this difference (cf. Lennard and Bernstein, 1960).

Assertives and Responsives present somewhat of a problem because they generally have the same grammatical form--declarative sentences. The way we distinguish between them is in terms of adjacency pairs. When a declarative sentence follows a question, it can be either a Responsive or an Assertive. It is a Responsive if it is related to the question as the second part of an adjacency pair; it is an Assertive if no adjacency pair relationship exists. Assertives may occur anywhere in a text, while Responsives are restricted by and large to the second position in a question-answer adjacency pair.

In determining what is or is not a Responsive, we rely on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) analysis of ellipsis in question-answer sequences. According to Halliday and Hasan, a question may be followed by one of two possible responses: direct or indirect. Direct responses provide the information sought by the question, and they also tend to be elliptical, thus overtly signalling an adjacency pair relationship. Indirect responses, as the name suggests, may comment on a question, provide an evasive answer, or answer the question, but obliquely. Indirect responses may be elliptical but in a less obvious way (see Halliday and Hasan, 1976:212-213).

A speaker has the option of responding directly, indirectly, or not responding at all:

> Not all questions have answers; but no less significant is the fact that not all answers have a question. The 'question-answer' sequence is a standard pattern in language, and not surprisingly the special type of cohesive relation that subsists between an answer and its question has its own characteristic grammatical properties. At the same time there are other sequences involving rejoinders of one kind and another (Halliday and Hasan, 1976:206).

One type of rejoinder which we code as a Responsive may follow an Assertive, Repair Initiation, or another Responsive. This type of rejoinder allows the speaker to express agreement or disagreement with the preceding utterance, for example:

(15) T: It seems that half the students here are from Hong Kong, and= AS

I: =So many student, right, come from Hong Kong. (p. 5) RS

Here the student agrees with the teacher's Assertive by paraphrasing what was said. As we have seen above, agreements or disagreements may also follow Repair Initiations:

(16) I: Some lesson have uh Chinese translate. AS

T: Translated into Chinese? RP

I: Yeah. (p. 10) RS

Here the student agrees with the teacher's Clarification Question.

As Halliday and Hasan point out, not every question has an answer. A speaker can sometimes ignore his interlocutor's question or repair initiation. Instead of responding directly or indirectly, he can instead produce an

unrelated utterance to change the topic of conversation and thus avoid giving a response. In this analysis, such acts are coded as Assertives.

Due to the nature of the situational context--an interview between a student and teacher--the speech functions that came to the fore were restricted by and large to the exchange of information. Consequently, because only two participants were involved in each conversation and each had a fairly well-defined role, there were few examples of functional equivocality. Most acts could be coded following the criteria outlined above, and when there was any doubt as to the intention of an utterance, it became clear from the broader context. On the other hand, genuine cases of functional equivocality were resolved in a consistent manner. For example, as we have already seen, each question was allowed to have only one response:

(17)	T:	And how many hours do you spend in the office?	RQ
	G:	Depend, uh, when I have break time.	AS
		Two break time, I go to my office.	AS
		Maybe after my last class.	AS
		Almost two hours for one day. (p. 13)	RS

Above the first and the last act in G's turn are possible responses to the question. In this analysis, we consider the act related grammatically through ellipsis to the question as the Responsive. The other acts are coded as Assertives,

if they can be coded neither as Requestives or Repair Initiations, as in (13).

To avoid needless confusion it is important to remember that conversation can be analyzed at several different levels, for example, acts, moves, exchanges, etc. (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975:48). Each superordinate level subsumes under it several subordinate elements; thus a Responsive move (e.g., G's turn above) may contain several Assertive acts, followed by a Responsive act, which are all part of the Responsive move.

Odds and Ends. A number of utterance types are not computed for the purposes of this analysis--acknowledgements (ak), repetions (rp), parenthetic expressions (pe), boundary markers (bm), and tags in tag questions. The above lack either their own illocutionary force or are non-propositional in nature (see Martin, 1979b).

Acknowledgements were excluded because they are always non-propositional; they function merely to let the speaker know that the hearer is listening; they have no substantive informational function:[7]

(18) E: I really don't know what the teacher talking about= AS

T: =Yeah= ak

E: =I just sat there and AS

say nothing to anybody else,

and they don't talk to me, you know= AS

T: =Yeah ak

E: That's bad there, that's all. (p. 12) AS

Above "Yeah" is used as an acknowledgement so it is not counted, but when it is used to show agreement, it is counted because as an agreement it is elliptical for a complete sentence and therefore expresses a proposition:

(19) T: And when you were in Hong Kong, did you study English in school? RQ

C: Yes. (p. 10) RS

In this exchange "Yes" is used elliptically to mean, "Yes, when I was in Hong Kong, I studied English in school." As an agreement this utterance is coded as a Responsive act. Agreements such as "Yes," "No," "Yeah," which stand alone are counted as separate conversational acts, but when they are followed by a larger responsive act which is cohesively related to the preceding utterance, they are considered to be part of that act, for example:

(20) T: Do you like doing it? RQ

K: No, I don't think I like it. (p. 10) RS

Here "No" and the utterance that follows it are coded as one Responsive act. (For a more extensive discussion of this issue see Halliday and Hasan, 1976:212-214).

Other conversational tracking devices that are not computed in our analysis are boundary markers such as "Well," and "Now." Like acknowledgements, they are non-propositional and merely indicate shifts in conversation:

(21)	T:	You're not in it.	AS
		It's too late now.	AS
		Now,	bm
		are you going to a tutorial?	RQ
	U:	Yeah. (p. 15)	RS

Another group of frequently occuring non-propositional acts that was not computed in the analysis is composed of parenthetic expressions such as, "you know," "well," and so on. For example:

(22)	O:	It's like regular college.	AS
		Your final grade is the most important part,	AS
		you know,	pe
		One third of it. (pp. 5-6)	AS

The function of parenthetic expressions seems to be to slow the pace of conversation, show solidarity, or seek sympathy and understanding. Parenthetic expressions were not coded as separate conversational acts because they are non-propositional and are always subsidary to other acts.

Repetitions of part of an utterance which occur in the course of a word search or in an attempt to express a meaning in the target language for which the learner lacks the linguisitc

mechanism, are not counted as separate conversational acts. In this respect we again follow Martin (1979b:20-22). Such utterances express no proposition and have no speech function of their own such as requesting, responding, asserting, or repairing. However, not all repetitions are of this type; sometimes repetition of part or whole of an interlocutor's utterance is used to show agreement or seek confirmation or clarification. In such cases repetitions are coded as Responsives and Repair Initiations, respectively.

Tags in tag-questions are not considered separate conversational acts because they only qualify the sentences to which they are attached and have no conversational function of their own (Martin, 1979b:7).

FOOTNOTES

1 All other non-propositional, non-elliptical acts are coded together under a fifth category, Organizational Devices, which are excluded from the analysis. These include boundary markers, parenthetic expressions, exclamations, certain repetitions, etc. Some of these will be discussed in a bit more detail below. Non-verbal responses, no answers, and unintelligible responses are similarly excluded from the analysis.

2 Dore (1979:24) discusses the equivocality of utterances in conversation; for example, it is often difficult to distinguish between when an utterance functions as a question or an action request. We avoid such problems by not troubling with such a distinction--by treating both as Requestives. Similarly, problems arising out of differentiating between attributions and evaluations are resolved again by looking at what they share and subsuming them under the category of Assertives.

3 Halliday and Hasan (1976) distinguish between additive and coordinate relations: "...the coordinate relation is structural, whereas the additive relation is cohesive" (p. 234). In other words, coordinate relations create single structural units, while additive relations link independent units.

4 Excluding, of course, the class on minor, non-propositional acts.

5 Keller-Cohen (1975) noted similar phenomena with children acquiring English as a second language, and Hatch (1978) observed the use of repetition and paraphrase by adult ESL learners.

6 Of course, there is always the possibility that the conversational acts of two speakers may overlap.

7 In conversation, most acknowledgement is carried out non-verbally, through eye contact, hand gestures, and other kinesic signals. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975:47) maintain that in classroom discourse acknowledgement is also usually non-verbal.

Chapter VI

CONDITIONS FOR REPAIR INITIATION

Repair Initiations play a pivotal role in our analysis of the communication of second language learners. In the following chapter we will examine the frequency of Repair Initiations; but first we have to determine under what conditions they occur. In dealing with these issues it cannot be overemphasized again that the terms Repair and Repair Initiation are used here in the technical sense, as defined by Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977). At face value these terms may be somewhat misleading because they imply that something is wrong that must be righted. However, "In view of the point about repair being initiated with no apparent error, it appears that nothing is, in principle, excludable from the class 'repairable'" (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977:363). We wanted to determine what was conditioning Repair Initiations: was it grammatical errors, which non-native speakers of English are expected to produce a lot of, or was it violations of Gricean maxims, or perhaps no violations of any kind at all?

The Gricean maxims will be discussed first. The maxim of quantity--too little or too much information--was the most

frequently violated in the preceding turn. In many cases the learner simply provided less information than expected:

(1) T: Do you...do you ever speak English to any of your friends? RQ

I: No RS

T: No, never? RP

I: Never. (p. 13) RS

There were few examples of too much information being volunteered. In fact, only one of the students (G) fell into this category.

The next most frequently violated Gricean maxim was Manner. Trouble arose because the learner's utterances were obscure and/or ambiguous. What the speaker intended to say was not clear for one or more of the following reasons: false presumption about the listener's knowledge or lack of knowledge of the topic, syntactic or phonological deviance, the use of inappropriate vocabulary items, and so on:

(2) I: My father caught a lung cancer AS

She died. AS

T: Your <u>father</u> died of lung cancer? (p. 18) RP

Here the Repair Initiation occurs because it is not clear whether the learner is talking about her father or perhaps her mother since she uses the pronoun <u>she</u> in the second sentence instead of the expected <u>he</u>.

Quality--that is, truthfulness or believability of an utterance--proved to be the third most significant Gricean maxim. In inter-linguistic situations a listener can never be absolutely sure whether his interlocutor's utterances are indeed intended to convey the apparent meaning. Such doubts may stem from cultural, social, or linguistic incompatibility between the two languages, or from unexpected or simply incredible information:

(3) T: Have//you given any speeches? RQ
K: //Maybe Chinese I like that better. AS
T: You'd like to give your speeches in Chinese? RP
K: Yeah. (p. 9) RS

Relation, or relevance, was the least significant of the Gricean maxims, in so far as Repair Initiations are concerned. In only three out of the nine transcripts are there any examples of violations of this maxim preceding Repair Initiations. The last example may also be interpreted as a violation of the Relation maxim; however, the listener accepts it as relevant but unbelievable; we, therefore, consider it a violation of the Quality maxim.

The examples discussed so far illustrate pretty clearly how the various Gricean maxims are violated. However, in many other cases there was a great deal of ambiguity. For example, at times it was difficult to say whether an utterance proved difficult to comprehend because it was obscure or because it provided less information than expected, or both.

We decided not to differentiate among the Gricean maxims because it was not absolutely necessary for our analysis; because taken individually the four Gricean maxims represent samples too small to be significant, and because sufficient ground work has not yet been laid for such an inquiry.

As we have seen above, the turn preceding a Repair Initiation may have a violation of a Gricean maxim, in which case the successful transmission of the message is impaired. The successful transmission of a message may also be impaired by a grammatical error. Grammatical errors in many instances are followed by Repair Initiations; those instances where there was difficulty in utterance interpretation are considered, for the purposes of this analysis, violations of Gricean maxims. The object of such Repair Initiations appears to be not to correct errors, or provide a model for self correction, but to establish clearly the intended meaning.

However, there are examples where the goal of the Repair Initiation is not to agree upon the meaning of the utterance but to rectify a syntactic, morphological, phonological, or lexical error in the preceding turn. Their purpose is to give the speaker a chance to correct a grammatical error even though no comprehension difficulty is evident:

(4)	T:	So, how do you like Xxxx College so far?	RQ
	C:	No, I don't like.	RS
	T:	You don't like it?	RP
	C:	I don't like.	RS

T: Huh? RP

C: I don't like it. (p. 2-3) RS

Repair Initiations may also be preceded by no violations of any grammatical rules or Gricean maxims, as Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) point out. Such utterances indicate understanding and acceptance of the speaker's remarks and encourage him to continue contributing to the conversation.

(5) T: And how many credits do you have? RQ

K: Thirteen credits. RS

T: Thirteen credits? (Pause) (p. 3) RP

Of the three categories of utterances preceding Repair Initiations, violations of Gricean maxims predominated, representing from 73% to 90% (see Table 1).

Repair Initiations whose purpose it would seem to be to provide a model for the learner to imitiate proved to be less frequent than might be expected, ranging from zero to 14%. The rate of such Repair Initiations appears to be a function of each individual's control of the grammar of English; with one exception, those learners who produced fewest errors (i.e., error-free Conversational Acts) had the fewest Repair Initiations of this type addressed to them, while those with the greatest number of errors had the greatest number of Repair Initiations of this type.

Table 1

Percentages of Repair Initiations following turns violating Gricean maxims, grammatical errors and no violations of any kind.

Student	Gricean maxims	Grammatical errors	Other
O	88.1	0	11.9
L	90.5	1.6	7.9
K	83.7	3.3	13.0
N	75.8	6.1	18.1
C	78.1	9.6	12.3
G	72.7	10.9	16.4
E	76.9	7.7	15.4
U	75.0	14.3	10.7
I	85.2	3.7	11.1

Table 2 juxtaposes Repair Initiations preceded by grammatical errors and Repair Initiations intended to stimulate self-correction of such errors by the learner. We see that only a small portion of each learner's errors result in attempts by the interlocutor to have the learner rectify them.

Repair Initiations which confirm prior utterances with no apparent violation of Gricean maxims or grammatical rules ranged form 8% to 18%. These are perfectly normal devices designed to keep the conversation going, or to slow it down.

Table 2

Percentages of grammatical errors in turns preceding Repair Initiations compared with the percentages of Repair Initiations intended to result in learner self-correction

Student	Total Errors before Repair Initiations	Learner Self Correction Intended
O	35.7	0
L	23.8	1.6
K	25.0	3.3
N	30.3	6.1
C	35.6	9.6
G	56.3	10.9
E	33.3	7.7
U	41.1	14.3
I	42.6	3.7

It should be noted that the figures in Table 1 represent the relative proportions of the three types of environments preceding other Repair Initiations. Comparing these results with the Repair Ratio (i.e., the proportion of Conversational Acts represented by Repair Initiations in the interviewer's speech), no statistically significant correlation is found (r_S=.72, n.s.).

Table 3

Comparison of Error-Free Conversational acts and Repair Ratio

Student	Error-Free CAs	Repair Ratio
O	70.3	.316
L	58.2	.396
E	57.9	.302
N	53.9	.179
C	48.3	.359
I	48.0	.362
K	40.6	.429
U	38.0	.408
G	33.5	.544

However, no statistically significant relationship does not mean no relationship at all. If we divide the learners into two groups--grammatically advanced (O, L, N, E) and less advanced (C, I, K, U, G), we find a definite relationship between Error-Free Conversational Acts[1] and Repair Ratio for the less advanced group, but not for the advanced group (with the exception of E). It would appear that at the lower levels of grammatical proficiency, errors lead to comprehension difficulties, while at the more advanced levels, other factors come into play. O and L have higher Repair

Ratios than might be expected from their grammatical accuracy, and N has a lower Repair Ratio than expected. If we look at Table 1, we find that in terms of the utterances preceding Repair Initiations, O and L are the two lowest when it comes to Repair Initiations being intended as grammatical correction models, but in terms of violations of Gricean maxims they are the two highest. This may mean that their conversational difficulties stem from sources other than grammatical errors. N, on the other hand, has the lowest Repair Ratio but she is ranked fourth grammatically. Unlike O and L, in terms of violations of Gricean maxims, she ranks as one of the lowest, and moderate in terms of Repair Initiations intended to stimulate grammatical corrections. She is so effective at avoiding Gricean violations that percentagewise for her the "Other" category (see Table 1) is inflated, although in raw numbers Repair Initiations following the "Other" category are no greater for her than for the other learners. For the whole group, this category ranged from 5 for U to 12 for K; N was in the middle with 8. However, because the total number of Repair Initiations addressed to her was smaller than to all the others, the results in percentages appear larger than they really are.

FOOTNOTE

[1]Error-free Conversational Acts will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VII.

Chapter VII

RESULTS

In this chapter we first discuss the results of the paper-and-pencil tests and compare them with the learners' length of residence in the United States. As an alternate measure of grammatical knowledge, we consider the learners' grammatical accuracy in the interviews. Then, we consider our research hypothesis concerning the relationship between communication and grammar. Finally we propose a means for assessing the communicative effectiveness of second language learners and provide a possible explanation for our results.

Results of Grammar Tests. There was a high degree of correlation among the four paper-and-pencil tests:[1] dictation and cloze (r_S=.783), dictation and vocabulary (r_S=.900), and a perfect correlation between dictation and structure (r_S=1.00). All these correlations are significant at the $p < .01$ level. In only one case was no statistically significant correlation found; that was between the cloze test and vocabulary (r_S=.580).

Table 4

Results of grammar tests
in percentages

Student	Length of Residence	Cloze	Structure	Vocabulary	Dictation
O	15,5	72	72	72	90
L	9,11	78	77	76	93
K	8,3	36	60	59	79
N	4,11	56	63	53	87
C	4,9	40	39	32	71
G	4,2	32	32	33	59
E	4,0	42	51	40	76
U	3,11	46	37	39	66
I	3,5	38	36	45	60

What is surprising about these results is the high degree of inter-test correlation among the multiple choice structure and vocabulary tests and the dictation, a supposedly "integrative" test. Although the structure and vocabulary are multiple choice tests, they may be something more than ordinary discrete-point tests. Oller (1973a) defines discrete-point tests as tests which examine "one and only one point of grammar, phonology, vocabulary, or whatever at a time. It is rarely necessary for a student to understand whole sentences in order to answer discrete point items correctly, and it is probably accurate to state that

it is never necessary for a student to understand a context larger than a sentence in order to answer a discrete-point item" (Oller, 1973b:190). Going by this definition, the structure test we used certainly does not fit the mold of a discrete-point test, and as Oller (1973b:190) further says, anything that is not a discrete-point test must be an integrative test. In the structure test, all the items consist of two-sentence excerpts from conversation. The student has to choose a word or phrase to fill in a blank, for example,

"Are you going downtown?"

"Yes. _____to do some shopping."

(A) I'd like
(B) I'll like
(C) I like
(D) I'm likeing (CELT, Form S-A, p.4)

The vocabulary test is more problematical. The first half consists of single complete sentences with a blank for which the student must choose the word, for example,

All this shouting left Jack's voice very _____.

(A) brisk
(B) rash
(C) gaunt
(D) hoarse (CELT, Form V-A, p. 3)

The second part of the vocabulary test consists of definitions to which words must be matched up, for example,

a short, light sleep

(A) seige
(B) oath
(C) nap
(D) phase (CELT, Form V-A, p. 6)

This is the only part of the two tests that fits Oller's definition of a discrete-point test. It is therefore interesting that the students at the lower end of the scale make about two-thirds of their errors on this part, while the more advanced students make about equal numbers of errors on both parts of the vocabulary test. This phenomenon may be explained in terms of the students' experiences in learning English and the strategies they developed to cope with the necessity of using English to get things done. As was discussed earlier, all the students had very little or no formal training in ESL. Thus, it should not be surprising that the less advanced ones do better on those items which resemble conversation, with all of its built-in redundancy. When faced with a naked definition, the value of utilizing strategies acquired in conversation is greatly diminished.

The high correlations among some of the tests of grammatical knowledge suggest that they might be measuring the same thing, (cf. Farhady, 1979). However, each is generally assumed to measure a different construct: the vocabulary subtest is supposed to measure knowledge of the semantics of words and sentences; structure is supposed to measure knowledge of grammar; dictation is supposed to measure listening comprehension and grammar, and cloze is supposed to measure knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and the holistic understanding of the meaning of an entire passage. Why is it then that the inter-test correlations are so high?

Carroll (1980) points out that high correlations between tests purporting to measure different constructs obtain "only when the instruction itself has been broad and comprehensive, covering all these skills adequately" (Carroll, 1980:524). But the students in this study have had little formal instruction in English: they have learned most of what they know through exposure to and use of English. It cannot be said that they had received equal amounts of instruction in the various skills. However, it is possible that in untutored settings grammar, vocabulary, and listening comprehension develop in proportionate increments. That is, second language acquisition in a naturalistic setting leads to balanced linguistic competence, pretty much like that of children acquiring their native language.

In addition to the paper-and-pencil tests of grammar, we analyzed each student's actual performance in the interviews. Larsen-Freeman (1978) used percentage of error-free T-units as a measure of ESL grammatical development in compositions. T-units resemble our conversational acts in that they segment chunks of language into smaller units. However, they are customarily used to analyze written language, which usually consists of complete sentences. We decided to use error-free Conversational Acts as another measure of the grammatical development of our students. One option that was rejected was to categorize and count the actual errors. This

method was deemed less than perfect because in using it decisions would have to be made on the relative significance of different classes of errors. Is a morphological error more serious than a syntactic or a lexical one, or are they both of the same magnitude? We felt such questions to be unanswerable at this stage. The attractiveness of the error-free Conversational Act approach is that it emphasizes the positive aspects of the learner's competence. As a learner's skills grow toward native speaker norms, errors should become less and less frequent until they virtually disappear.

We counted as incorrect all syntactic, morphological and lexical errors. Deviations from standard American English which reflected the local dialect were not considered incorrect.

When the totals were first computed, little variation among the nine students was found (see Table 5). This lack of variation was due to the fact that there was a great deal of difference among the learners in the length of their Conversational Acts. For example, 39.31% of U's Conversational Acts consisted of single words, while E used single-word Conversational Acts only 17.98% of the time. This variation in the use of single word utterences tended to flatten the differences among the students, thus obscuring the generalizations that could be made if single-word utterances were excluded. Most of the single-word Conversational Acts were

responses to questions or Repair Initiations, and it is difficult to err when one merely says "yes," "no," or repeats a word. However, it does not mean that errors are impossible in single word utterances, and some students occasionally did make errors, for example, saying "sometime" for "sometimes," but in general errors in single-word utterances were rare. We, therefore, decided to subtract the single-word Conversational Acts from each student's total before computing the percentage of error-free Conversational Acts.[2]

Table 5

Summary of error data in percentages

Student	Error-free CAs (Total)	Error-free CAs (Excluding Single word CAs)	Single word CAs
O	76.52	70.30	23.48
L	69.24	58.24	26.16
K	54.14	40.63	22.41
N	64.91	53.92	23.84
C	66.42	48.28	35.07
G	47.30	33.53	19.80
E	65.47	57.90	17.98
U	64.40	38.03	39.31
I	64.39	48.00	31.50

The error-free Conversational Acts, after excluding those consisting of single words, reveal important differences among the learners which reflect the grade distribution pattern on three out of the four paper-and-pencil tests: Cloze (r_S=.783, $p < .01$), Structure and Dictation (r_S=.817, $p < .01$). Although there was a relationship between the percentage of error-free Conversational Acts and the Vocabulary test (r_S=.617, it was not significant at the $p < .01$ level. The high degree of correlation between error-free Conversational Acts and three of the paper-and-pencil tests would suggest that they are a valid measure of the student's grammatical knowledge.[3]

The Research Hypotheses. At the inception of this research we hypothesized that learners who produce lots of conversational acts will show better control of the target language than learners who produce fewer conversational acts. This hypothesis follows from recent work in the analysis of conversations between native speakers and non-native speakers and the finding that native language acquisition and second language acquisition may have much in common (Winitz, 1981). Children acquire their native language by engaging in conversation with their caretakers--they learn everything from syntax to conversational rules by communicating with those around them. The same appears to be the case

with second language acquisition in a naturalistic enviornment: "One learns how to do conversation, one learns how to interact verbally, and out of this interaction syntactic structures are developed"[4] (Hatch, 1978:404).

To test our hypothesis, we considered the measures of linguistic proficiency (discussed above) and Average Turn Length, which is calculated by taking each learner's total number of Conversational Acts and dividing it by the number of turns. Thus, if statistically significant correlations are found between Average Turn Length and the measures of linguistic proficiency, our hypothesis will be confirmed, but if no significant relationship proves to exist, we may have to seek alternative explanations.

Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficients were computed for Average Turn Length and Cloze (r_S=-.23, n.s.), Structure (r_S=108, n.s.), Vocabulary (r_S=.22, n.s.), Dictation (r_S=.08, n.s.), and error-free Conversational Acts (r_S=-.13, n.s.). None of these coefficients were statistically significant; in fact, they were so low as to suggest the relationship between Average Turn Length and the measures of linguistic proficiency to be random, which is, of course, the null hypothesis. But somehow that does not seem right. Intuitively we feel that there is a relationship, but it may be more complex than we first thought. It will be necessary to consider not only how much a learner communicates but how successful he is at it. We address this issue in the next section.

Communicative Effectiveness. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Average Turn Length is indicative of how much a person is participating in conversation. But what is the optimal amount of participation that makes communication most effective? The answer to this question, as we have already discussed, depends on the situation, participants, and so on. An effective communicator in any language knows just what to say, how much to say, how to say it, and when to say it. Saying too much or too little, saying it in imperfect grammar, saying it at an inopportune moment, or saying the wrong thing, may impair successful transmission of the message.

How much a second language learner talks is especially significant for us because recent studies indicate that with respect to syntax, learners sometimes avoid making errors by staying clear of potentially difficult structures (Schachter, 1976). We hypothesized that avoidance might also be a strategy followed by some second language learners in conversation. Learners may try to avoid difficulties by saying as little as is absolutely required. Such learners of necessity communicate less information than learners who do not use an avoidance strategy. A learner who restricts his conversational contribution to cryptic utterances may minimize his structural errors, but, by not supplying sufficient information, he runs the risk of violating Grice's conversational maxim to be as informative as is required. The learner, who

is the opposite, who is eager to communicate information and exchange ideas may convey lots of information but he greatly increases potential opportunities for structural errors as well as violations of several of Grice's maxims--being obscure, irrelevant, prolix, or simply more informative than is required. This, of course, does not mean to imply that those learners who follow an avoidance strategy will not violate these maxims. However, by restricting their conversational participation they reduce the risk, while the prolix by anxiously participating maximize their risks, if they are not sufficiently advanced grammatically or if they do not fully comprehend the discourse conventions of the second language. As we have seen in Chapter VI, violations of Grice's conversational maxims lead to repair initiations. Although both the avoiding and the prolix learners will create conditions for Repair Initiations, since the prolix learners may violate so many more structural rules and conversational conventions, they may also cause many more Repair Initiations to be directed to them.

But not all learners are either too cautious or too uninhibited. There are, of course, learners who speak with a fair degree of grammatical accuracy, communicate just the right amount of information, avoid obscurity and ambiguity. These are the learners who talk neither too little nor too much, and as a result they also tend to elicit fewer Repair

Initiations from their interlocutors. The ideal learner will say just as much as he sees fit and the situation requires, without posing undue comprehension difficulties for the interlocutor.

Our index of Communicative Effectiveness incorporates the two components discussed above--the amount of talk tempered by how successful it is in terms of the interlocutor's understanding. The amount of talk each learner produces is measured by dividing the learner's total number of Conversational Acts by the number of turns to give the Average Turn Length, and the interlocutor's understanding is gauged by dividing his total number of Repair Initiations by the total number of Conversational Acts which gives the Repair Ratio, i.e., the proportion of Repair Initiations in his speech. The ideal combination is high Average Turn Length and low Repair Ratio. Such a combination indicates that the learner conveys lots of information successfully. At the other end of the scale is low Average Turn Length and high Repair Ratio. This combination reveals that the learner is hesitant about supplying sufficient information and what little is supplied may not be totally comprehensible.

If we classify our learners as high, average, or low for their Average Turn Length and Repair Ratio, we will be in a position to make predictions on the basis of the possible combinations of the two components as to who is going to be

high, average, or low in Communicative Effectiveness. In general, if a learner's Average Turn Length ranking exceeds her Repair Ratio ranking, she will be rated as high in Communicative Effectiveness. If the two are equal, she will be rated average. And if her Repair Ratio exceeds her Average Turn Length ranking, she will be considered low in Communication Effectiveness. These effects become clearer if we substitute the numbers 1, 2, and 3 for the letters L, A, and H, respectively, and subtract the Repair Ratio from the average Turn Length:

Table 6

Communicative Effectiveness derived by subtracting Repair Ratio from Average Turn Length

Average Turn Length	Repair Ratio	Communicative Effectiveness	Average Turn Length	Repair Ratio	Communicative Effectiveness
H	L	H	3	1	+2
A	L	H	2	1	+1
H	A	H	3	2	+1
H	H	A	3	3	0
A	A	A	2	2	0
L	L	A	1	1	0
A	H	L	2	3	-1
L	A	L	1	2	-1
L	H	L	1	3	-2

The resulting positively valued numbers represent high Communicative Effectiveness, the zeros represent the average, and the negative numbers represent the low.

Three possible combinations yield a high Communicative Effectiveness index. The highest is a combination of high Average Turn Length and low Repair Ratio. These learners produce lots of speech and do it in such a way so as to elicit few Repair Initiations. The learners who have an average Average Turn Length and who have a low Repair Ratio are also considered high in Communicative Effectiveness. This means that the learner who talks a moderate amount and does so successfully is also an effective communicator, though perhaps not as effective as the one who is high in speech output. The learners who have a high Average Turn Length but who also have a high Repair Ratio, come out as average on the Communicative Effectiveness Index. They may not succeed in their attempts to express their messages the first time round, but at least they make an effort, thereby enlisting the aid of the interlocutor. Another type belonging to the average category is one that has an average Average Turn Length as well as an average Repair Ratio. Such a learner makes a moderate effort with resultant moderate success. The learner at the bottom of the Communicative Effectiveness scale has a low Average Turn Length and a high Repair Ratio. Another type of learner falling into the low Communicative Effectiveness category is one with a low Average Turn Length and an average Repair Ratio. Although such learners may not contribute a great deal to the conversation, they express themselves well

enough to elicit only an average number of Repair Initiations. Thus an avoidance strategy, in this respect, seems to be paying off.

Viewing the results in this way gives us a rough approximation of what combinations of conversational parameters define the most effective, least effective, and average communicators in a second language. This method is fine in a hypothetical discussion, but in dealing with actual data, we need a means for obtaining numerical values for the different levels of success. Much more specific results can be obtained by dividing Average Turn Length by the Repair Ratio:

$$\text{Communicative Effectiveness} = \frac{\text{Average Turn Length}}{\text{Repair Ratio}}$$

By counting the average number of Conversational Acts per turn, we can get some idea of how much information an individual communicates.[5] The Average Turn Length ranged in length from 1.241, Conversational Acts for C to more than twice that length, 2.707, for G, with the mean length for the whole group at 1.783. The Repair Ratio ranged from a low of .179 for N, to a high of .544 for G, with the mean at .366. This means that in the conversation with N the interviewer produced Repair Initiations about 18% of the time, but with G roughly 54% of his Conversational Acts were Repair Initiations. The index of Communicative Effectiveness ranged from a high of 10.81 for N to a low of 3.049 for U, with the mean at 5.269.

Table 7

Communicative Effectiveness derived by dividing Average Turn Length by Repair Ratio

Student	Repair Ratio	Average Turn Length	Communicative Effectiveness
O	.316	1.810	5.727
L	.396	1.857	4.689
K	.429	1.933	4.505
N	.179	1.935	10.810
C	.359	1.241	3.456
G	.544	2.707	4.976
E	.302	1.878	6.218
U	.408	1.244	3.049
I	.362	1.445	3.001
Mean	.366	1.783	5.269

No statistically significant relationship was found between the Index of Communicative Effectiveness and its two subcomponents--Average Turn Length (r_S=.716, n.s.) and Repair Ratio (r_S=.550, n.s.). This indicates that the overall index does not rely excessively on either of the two. Furthermore, no statistically significant relationship was found between Communicative Effectiveness and any of the measures of grammar--Cloze (r_S=.450, n.s.), Structure (r_S=.433, n.s.), Vocabulary (r_S=.375, n.s.) and Error-free Conversational Acts (r_S=.500, n.s.). These findings are not totally unexpected. Although grammar

is an important component in face-to-face conversation, it is not totally indispensable because spoken language, as was discussed in Chapter IV, is only one of several communication channels available to the interlocutors. The speaker's facial expressions, hand gestures, intonation and contrastive stress, as well as verbal and kinesic feedback from the interlocutor, help to make communication possible.

Since the scores of the learners are fairly evenly distributed, and to make exposition easier, we take the three highest scores for the Repair Ratio, Average Turn Length, and Communicative Effectiveness and call them high, take the three lowest scores and call them low, and the three scores in the middle and call them average:

Table 8

Results from Table 7 converted to high (H), average (A), and low (L)

Student	Repair Ratio	Average Turn Length	Communicative Effectiveness
N	L	H	H
E	L	A	H
O	L	A	H
G	H	H	A
K	H	H	A
L	A	A	A
I	A	L	L
C	A	L	L
U	H	L	L

The learners who are high or average on their Average Turn Length and low on the Repair Ratio have high Communicative Effectiveness Indexes; the learners who have high or average Repair Ratios and low Average Turn Lengths are rated as low; and the learners with average or high Repair Ratios and high Average Turn Lengths are rated as average.

In each of the three categories there seems to be a preferred (unmarked?) combination where two out of three learners follow one pattern. For the high group, it is average Average Turn Length and low Repair Ratio. O and E fit this pattern. Both of them are not terribly talkative, but they do communicate the information that is called for and do so to the satisfaction of the interlocutor. The learner attaining the highest Communicative Effectiveness index, N, has the combination of high Average Turn Length and low Repair Ratio. This combination was predicted in Table 6 to be communicatively most effective with the highest possible rating of +2. N stands apart from the other learners in the high group, with her score being nearly twice as high as the next leading score.

A similar pattern emerges at the low end of the scale. The student with the absolutely lowest Communicative Effectiveness index stands apart from the other members of her group due to the fatal combination of low Average Turn Length and high Repair Ratio. The other two learners in the low

group follow a slightly different pattern--low Average Turn Length and average Repair Ratio. It would appear that these learners, unlike U, succeed in avoiding trouble by speaking as little as possible.

The group labelled average also has two distinct profiles. The first (G and K) have both high Average Turn Length and Repair Ratio. These learners are extremely talkative but they lack conversational discretion, producing torrents of speech with little regard for whether what they produce is comprehensible. The second type (L) has average Average Turn Length as well as average Repair Ratio. In general, in the average group there is a balance between Average Turn Length and Repair Ratio.

It is sometimes assumed by second language researchers and teachers that as a learner's proficiency in the second language increases, so does the amount of his output in the second language. For example, Larsen-Freeman (1978:444) found that under like circumstances students of higher proficiency tended to write longer compositions than their lower proficiency counterparts. It is therefore reasonable to expect the learners in our sample who are more advanced grammatically to be the ones who also produce the greatest number of conversational acts. Conversely, learners who are less advanced grammatically, should produce fewer conversational acts. We should therefore expect the learners with the fewest

grammatical errors to produce the greatest amount of speech, that is, to have the longest Average Turn Lengths. This, of course, was our research hypothesis. If we consider the learners who paired up on their combinations of Average Turn Length and Repair Ratio (E and O, G and K, C and I), our predictions are not borne out:

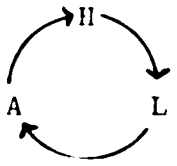
Table 9

Comparison of Average Turn Length and Error-free Conversational Acts

Student	Average Turn Length		Error-free Conversational Acts	
G	2.707	H	33.53	L
K	1.933	H	40.63	L
N	1.935	H	53.92	A
E	1.878	A	57.90	H
L	1.857	A	58.24	H
O	1.810	A	70.30	H
I	1.445	L	48.00	A
U	1.244	L	38.03	L
C	1.241	L	48.28	A

Contrary to our research hypothesis, it is not the high talkers who produce the greatest number of error-free Conversational Acts, but those who produce an average number

of Conversational Acts. In fact, the high output generators also produce proportionately the greatest number of errors, while those who talk least produce an average number of errors. Thus it appears that a strategy of limiting the amount of speech produced does lead to avoidance of grammatical errors. Conversely, lack of any kind of inhibition or conversational sensitivity leads to a multitude of errors. For these three pairs of learners, at least, there emerges a pattern reminiscent of the famous diagram representing Grimm's Law:



High talkers have low grammar; low talkers have average grammar; and average talkers have high grammar. Given the small number of participants in this study it is difficult to state categorically that these three pairs of learners represent generalizable norms. Even in our sample two of the participants did not fit this pattern, but they appear to represent the absolute extremes. The significant thing about the apparent exceptions is that among them are found both the highest and lowest learners on the Communicative Effectiveness index. The student with the lowest Communicative Effectiveness index (U) produced fewer error-free Comversational Acts than might be expected, while the learner with the highest index (N) produced more error-free Conversational Acts than expected (see Tables 7 and 9).

How do these findings contribute to a better understanding of second language acquisition? Our data indicate an apparent disparity between the amount of talk produced and grammatical accuracy. For the first six learners in Table 9 (G, K, N, E, L, O) as the Average Turn Length goes down, grammatical accuracy goes up. It would appear that learners with low grammatical accuracy may attempt to compensate for this deficit by producing a great deal of speech. However, their speech is marred by constant errors which impede successful communication. The learners with high grammatical accuracy produce an average amount of speech, which may be no more nor less than is expected under the circumstances, while the learners with average grammatical accuracy in an attempt to avoid trouble produce too little speech thus making their communication less than satisfactory.

With regard to grammatical accuracy and communicative effectiveness, what seems to be happening, again with the exception of the highest, lowest, and an average learner, is that those learners with high grammar do indeed attain high Communicative Effectiveness indexes, learners with low grammar achieve average Communicative Effectiveness indexes, while the learners with average grammar show low Communicative Effectiveness indexes (Table 10).

Table 10

Communicative Effectiveness and Error-free Conversational Acts. Compare with Table 8, where N, L, and U also stand out as exceptions to the general trend

Student	Communicative Effectiveness	Error-free Conversational Acts
N	H	A
E	H	H
O	H	H
G	A	L
K	A	L
L	A	H
I	L	A
C	L	A
U	L	L

Instead of looking at the effects of grammar on Communicative Effectiveness, we can also look at the flip side of the coin--the possible effects of communication on grammatical development. If we are correct in assuming that these conversations are representative of the way these learners communicate with other sympathetic native speakers of English and given the fact that what they know of English was learned through conversation, we can perhaps begin to understand what learner strategies lead to successful acquisition of grammatical structures. C and I, two learners who are low on the Communicative Effectiveness Index, have average grammar and

and low Average Turn Length, which suggests that they might be avoiding grammatical errors by speaking as little as possible, but they have average Repair Ratios which suggests that they are strictly monitoring their output. The people average in Communicative Effectiveness, K and G, produce few error-free Conversational Acts, but they are also the most talkative, producing the highest Average Turn Lengths. They seem unrestrained in their output, with no monitoring of any kind. Not surprisingly, they also have the highest Repair Ratios. The learners who hit the mark with high Communicative Effectiveness and high grammar, E and O, talk an average amount. They also monitor their speech enough to have a low Repair Ratio. Thus, questions in the literature which ask whether "foreigner talk," which includes what we call Repair Initiations here, aids in the acquisition process (e.g., Long, 1981) miss the mark because for some learners it may work but for others it may have absolutely no effect. Learners appear to have different communication styles and it is these styles which determine how they communicate and whether their grammars are in any way enhanced through communication, or whether they reach a certain plateau at which they fossilize.

The three remaining learners who do not fit the patterns discussed above, nonetheless, contribute further confirmation to the conclusion reached in the above paragraph. N who had high Communicative Effectiveness, but average grammar also had a high Average Turn Length, which suggests that she was not

following an avoidance strategy. On the other hand, she also had a low Repair Ratio which means that she was able to monitor her output well. In fact, she was not only very sensitive to the reaction of the interviewer but she also often corrected her own errors right after producing them, lending further support to her monitoring ability. The combination of high output and high monitoring makes for the highest Communicative Effectiveness index.

The learner at the other end of the scale, U, combines low Communicative Effectiveness with low grammar, low Average Turn Length, and high Repair Ratio. This learner talked very little and was unable to monitor her output thus contributing to a high Repair Ratio.

The learner in the middle, L, had an average Communicative Effectiveness index, but high grammar. Her average Average Turn Length would suggest that like O and E she was providing sufficient information; however, many of her utterances supplied unexpected information which led to uncertainty on the part of the interviewer and consequent Repair Initiations. Unlike the other two learners in her group, she seems to lack the ability to monitor her speech for both grammatical and discourse violations.

These results indicate that there are two variables involved in language learning--the structure of the language and the content of the message. Some learners focus on both

structure and content, some on structure and not on content, some on content and not structure, and some on neither structure nor content.

Table 11

Two variables in language learning

Structure Focused	Content Focused
+	+
+	-
-	+
-	-

In terms of communicative success, the most effective learners are the ones who pay attention to both structure and content; the least effective learners pay attention to neither; the rest fall somewhere in between. However, in terms of grammatical achievement, it is the structure focused ones who excel over the rest, whether they are content oriented or not. To illustrate this point, in the following chapter we compare two learners, both of whom are content oriented, but only one of whom pays any attention to structure.

FOOTNOTES

[1] In this research only nonparametric statistics are used because the sample is small so many of the assumptions (e.g., normal distribution, random selection, etc.) required for parametric statistics cannot be made. Therefore, these results may only be suggestive of population trends; definitive decisions must await research with larger numbers of subjects.

Nonparametric measures of correlation (Siegel, 1956) will be used in accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis, that is, deciding whether an observed relationship is due to chance or not. The significance level adopted here for rejecting the null hypothesis is $p < .01$, which means that even if we reject the null hypothesis, there is still a 1% chance that we might be wrong.

[2] Henceforth, the expression "error-free Conversational Acts" will be used to refer to error-free Conversational Acts excluding those consisting of single word utterances.

[3] These correlations in all likelihood would have been even higher if we had counted non-standard forms as incorrect, as the paper-and-pencil tests do.

[4] Second language acquisition can perhaps be more accurately characterized if a few words are changed in Hatch's quotation: Change "One learns how to do conversation" to "One does conversation" and "one learns how to interact verbally" to "one interacts verbally." There is no evidence that the basic elements of conversation in English are any different from the basic elements in any other language (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974:700). In every language there are means for asking questions, making statements and requests, asking for clarification, etc. What is different are the socio-cultural conditions under which these conversational devices may be put to use.

[5] Our notion of information is akin to that of Lennard and Bernstein (1960), except that we use Conversational Acts instead of propositions in our computations:

> Information was also defined as output or verbal activity per se. We considered a single idea or proposition as one unit of information, and measured the amount of information in a message or statement by counting the number of

propositions or ideas it contained. Thus we assumed that a long statement (one containing many propositions) contained more information than a short statement (containing only one or two propositions) (Lennard and Bernstein, 1960:21).

Chapter VIII

Learner Communication Strategies

In this chapter we compare the communication strategies of two learners--one "good" and one "poor"--to see what it is precisely that in one case leads to success in attaining mastery of the target language and in the other to a decided lack of development.[1] It would appear that some learners acquire more grammatical knowledge from conversation than do others. What, then, are the conversational strategies used by the successful and unsuccessful learners? In contrasting the two learners below, we will try to determine which conversational strategies lead not only to conversational success but to grammatical development as well. We will also investigate the possibility that over-reliance on one strategy or group of strategies may lead to the inhibition of other strategies. The two learners we have chosen for closer scrutiny are quite similar in non-linguistic respects but they differ tremendously in their levels of linguistic achievement; therefore, they provide clear contrasts of what successful and unsuccessful learners actually do in conversation in the target

language. Their behavior perhaps may shed some light on what might be the best approach to facilitate learning and instruction for the vast majority of learners.

A "Good" and a "Poor" Learner. The two learners chosen for comparison are N and G. They have a great deal in common yet they differ radically in grammatical achievement and communication. They were friends and sat next to each other in class. They had lived in the U.S. for approximately the same amount of time (N: 4,11; G: 4,2) and were approximately the same age (N: 20,7; G: 21,2). They lived in the same neighborhood-Chinatown. They had no siblings at home. Their parents spoke no English. They had been at the same college for the same amount of time and had taken similar courses. Characteristics such as these are often said to have an impact on language learning. In this case they are kept constant, thus it can be assumed that any differences which might be found must be due to other factors.

The place where the greatest differences emerge is on the grammar tests. On each test N's score is over 50% higher than G's (see Table 12). These disparities are too great to be attributed to the nine-month difference in their length of residence in the United States or the six-month difference in age. G received substantially lower scores on the grammar tests than the three other learners who had lived in the U.S. less time, while N received higher scores on three out of four

tests than K, who had lived in the U.S. over three years longer than N (see Table 4). The disparities cannot be attributed to any English as a second language instruction they may have had in Hong Kong; both report that when they came here they knew no English. Nor can ESL instruction in high school in the U.S. provide the explanation.

Table 12

Summary of all data on N and G

	N	G
Length of Residence	4,11	4,2
Age	20,7	21,1
ESL classes	No	Yes
Cloze	56%	32%
Structure	63%	32%
Vocabulary	53%	33%
Dictation	87%	59%
Error-free Conversational Acts	54%	34%
Average Turn Length	1.94	2.70
Repair Ratio	.179	.544
Communicative Effectiveness	10.81	4.98
Responsives	39%	36%
Assertives	51%	63%
Requestives	7%	0%
Repair Initiations	3%	0.5%

In fact, G, the poor learner, was the one who had an hour's instruction in ESL daily when she came here, while N had no ESL instruction at all. It is safe to say that both have learned most of what they know of English from listening to their teachers in school, from conversation with peers and shopkeepers, and from passive exposure. Furthermore, while both report speaking no English at home, G had many opportunities to use it in a college office where she worked as a student aide. N had no such opportunities, yet she made higher grades on the tests of grammar.

Could it be that G is a more effective communicator as a result of her greater exposure to and use of English? The answer is an unequivocal no. Although she produced the greatest number of conversational acts per turn (Average Turn Length=2.70), she also evoked the greatest proportion of Repair Initiations from the interviewer (Repair Ratio=.544). N, on the other hand, produced proportionately fewer conversational acts per turn (Average Turn Length=1.94), but she elicited the smallest proportion of Repair Initiations from the interviewer (Repair Ratio=.179) of all the learners. Not surprisingly, these two learners differ in how successful their communication is; the overall index of Communicative Effectiveness for N is 10.81, the highest for the whole group, while for G it is 4.98, just average. Although G talks a great deal, she has little to show for it in terms of grammatical development,

and she is only moderately successful in her communicative attempts. N, on the other hand, talks a lot less, yet she is communicating successfully and learning grammar at the same time.

What can explain this apparent anomaly? It will be shown that the crucial difference between these two learners lies in how they use conversation, not in how much speech they produce; that is, in how they respond to questions, how they initiate questions, how they respond to other repairs, how they initiate self repairs, and so on. Throughout this discussion we will use the term "good language learner" to refer to a person who demonstrates some degree of success in the acquisition of the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical systems of the target language. The term "poor language learner" is applied to a person who fails to gain control over one or more of the above components. In short, the good language learner is structure focussed, while the poor language learner is content focussed. Both types of learners may be good or poor communicators, but only the structure focussed ones derive grammatical knowledge from communicative exchanges.

Responding to Questions. One of the areas where good language learners differ from poor ones is in the way they respond to questions. The good learner, as Rubin (1975) and Stern (1980) point out, "attends to structure," that is, she

utilizes the structural information in the interlocutor's question in her response:

(1) T: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

N: Yeah, I have big brother,

but he's in China. (p. 21)

Here N responds canonically to the choice question substituting "I" for "you" and qualifying "brother" with "big." She further qualifies the whole response with "but he's in China." The poor learner, on the other hand, fails to attend to structure:

(2) T: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

G: No.

T: No, you're the only child?

G: Yeah.

It's not only.

I got a brother in the China. (p. 7)

Unlike the good learner, the poor learner responds to the choice question with a one-word utterance, which is elliptical for "No, I don't have any brothers or sisters." The interviewer is not sure of the reply so he asks for a confirmation by paraphrasing the elliptical reply. At first the student agrees, but soon realizes that the interviewer's confirmation is not in accord with what she had intended, so she qualifies it with "It's not only." This last move illustrates her seeming inability to utilize structural information from her

interlocutor's speech in her responses. All she had to do was to replace "you're" by "I'm" and add "not" to the interviewer's confirmation to get the canonical reply: "No, I'm not the only child." However, she uses a stock formula that she customarily uses in responses: "it's." Numerous other examples of this ostensibly "fossilized" form are found in her transcript:

(3) T: So how's everything today?
G: It's good. (p.1)

(4) T: When did you start coming to X-- College?
G: I, last year.
It's, uh, June.
T: In //June
G: //June
T: Oh, you came here in the summer.
G: Oh, is not sum, after summer. (p. 2-3)

(5) (Discussing her study habits)
T: So, you're getting better now at least.
G: Yes, it's more better,
but still is very poor my writing and speak. (p. 24)

(6) (Comparing her experiences in college with high school.)
G: When I go to college. I know most people is nice.
It's not doing like a high school, the pressure.
So I like to talk to.
I like even make friends. (p. 24)

There are times, however, when "it's" is called for but she uses only "is" instead, omitting "it," as in the last utterance in (4) and (5) and in the following examples:

(7) T: Oh, so you're having fun being a big official.
G: Yeah, sometime <u>is</u>, uh, fun. (p. 13)

(8) T: Are they paying you a lot of money?
G: No.
<u>Is</u> two, two dollar ninety for one hour. (p. 14)

There is a certain amount of regularity in her omission or overuse of "it." The expletive "it" tends to be omitted, while the anaphoric "it" tends to be retained. We use the verb "tends" here because there are cases where both types of "it" are used correctly, but those seem to be stock phrases which have been memorized as units and, though grammatically correct, may be used inappropriately. For example, continuing the conversation in (8), the interviewer paraphrases her final utterance:

(9) T: Two dollars and ninety //cents an hour?
G: //It's cheap.
T: Yeah, it's not much=
G: =<u>It's</u> cheap, but doesn't matter.
I'm not care about money.
I want to learn English. (p. 14)

He again paraphrases her incorrectly used utterance, "it's cheap," as "it's not much," but she fails to take note of the

structural difference and repeats her prior statement without pause trying to communicate additional information.

It is evident from the above examples that G, the poorer language learner is pretty much oblivious to structural input (and her scores in grammar and error-free Conversational Acts reflect this); she concentrates on expressing her ideas, making herself understood, communicating. The desire to learn English and to communicate in it is revealed in what she says (9) and what she does in conversation. She is one of the few students who interrupts the interviewer in midstream or jumps in right when he finishes. (We will discuss this phenomenon below.) However, the desire and the nascent ability to communicate seem not to have much impact on grammatical development. For grammar to develop in a second language the learner must pay attention to form--not only to meaning. Ervin-Tripp (1970) points out that it may be possible to make semantic interpretations by relying on "non-linguistic cues or on single words in the question, without fully processing the grammatical structure of the question" (p. 82). This appears to be G's strategy.

The good language learner pays attention to the grammatical form of the interlocutor's utterances and utilizes that information in her responses. Perhaps the best evidence for this comes not from correct responses, but from errors. For example, when a learner responds correctly to a question,

that response could come from one of two possible sources--either the learner knows a rule which she calls upon to generate the appropriate response, or the learner has a learning strategy for taking the structural information in the question to formulate her response. If there is an error, however, the first possibility is eliminated, for example:

(10) (Talking about English classes in Hong Kong.)

T: And how many hours a day did you have it?

N: Uhm, one hours. (p. 23)

There are many other places where N uses plural and singular nouns appropriately, but here in response to a question she errs because she apparently is trying to utilize structural information from the interviewer's input in her response. Such structural sensitivity, although occasionally counterproductive, we feel accounts for N's better-than-expected success on the grammar tests, and the nearly total lack of such sensitivity may account for the lack of success on the part of G. G's speech appears to be highly fossilized, while N's speech has only occasional lapses in tense, third person singular /-s/, or lexical choice. They both communicate quite successfully, but G's speech is marred by repeatedly recurring fossilized forms. In the following section we discuss the conditions which lead to fossilization.

Fossilization. The concept of fossilization in second language learner speech has become the subject of a great deal

of interest in recent years. Much discussion centers around the assumption that at some point in second language acquisition, development ceases and the learner is condemned to speak an "interlanguage" full of errors from the standpoint of the target language. Errors are systematic, that is, representing the learner's competence, as opposed to mistakes which are not systematic, resulting from performance factors. Various explanations have been posited for fossilization: neurological (Selinker, 1972; Lamendella, 1977), sociological (Schumann, 1976), and operant (Vigil and Oller, 1976).

Vigil and Oller (1976) attempt to explain the process of fossilization[2] in second language learning in terms of the type of feedback the learner receives from his interlocutors. In this respect their approach is closest to the one adopted here. They distinguish between two types of feedback--affective, having to do with interpersonal relationships, and cognitive, having to do with the meaning of utterances.

> On the cognitive channel, positive feedback means roughly, "your intent is clear," or "I understand what you are saying"; neutral feedback can be interpreted as meaning "I am still processing your message to discover your intended meaning (i.e., its cognitive import"; and negative feedback means "I don't understand," or "if I understand you correctly I don't see how what you are saying relates to our conversation" or something of the sort (Vigil and Oller, 1976:286).

According to Vigil and Oller, positive affective feedback combined with positive cognitive feedback[3] in the face of grammatical errors will lead to fossilization. Positive affective feedback and negative cognitive feedback create

instability and cause the learner to make appropriate modifications in her grammar. Positive affective feedback and neutral cognitive feedback may be interpreted by the learner as either positive or negative. The interviewer's second turn in (10) is an example of neutral cognitive feedback which is apparently interpreted by the student as positive since she agrees with the Confirmation Request.

(10) T: And how many hours a day did you have these English classes?

C: Forty-five minute.

T: Forty-five minutes?

C: Yeah. (p. 12)

If it had been taken as negative cognitive feedback, the learner would have noted the difference between her utterance and the interviewer's and corrected her error.

As expected, for all students positive cognitive feedback results in the continuation of conversation:

(11) (Talking about her mother's native language.)

K: I understand, but don't know what she...
Sometime I don't...got, got
what she's saying too.

T: Yeah

K: And I don't know how to say it her language=

T: =Yeah

K: All mess up, all this languages.
Maybe somebody, uh, Shanghai, you know,

Shanghai language=

T: =Uhum=

K: =all together.

xxxxxxxxxxxxx I don't know.

T: Oh, you mix them all together. (K, p. 15)

Above the teacher acknowledges three times that he understands what the student is saying, so the student just keeps on going adding more information. This kind of positive cognitive feedback builds up the student's confidence because she is, after all, communicating successfully, but it may also lead her to the false belief that she has reached a native or near-native level of performance in the target language.

Negative cognitive feedback should result in the correction of a prior utterance:

(12) T: It's bad because you feel very sick and tired.

I: I know that.

Very suffer, right got a flu [fru],

I mean very suffer go a flu [fru].

T: Where is...

I don't understand.

I: I mean very uncomfortable when you got a flu [fru], right? (pp.15-16)

How does the good language learner differ from the poor one in handling these three types of feedback? In terms of positive cognitive feedback, there is no difference; both

learners usually continue with the conversation. Negative feedback usually results in grammatical improvement for N, but there was one case where the opposite occured:

(13) N: If I got a failing grade in English---,
can I have this class? You know, right?

T: Hm?

N: If I get a failing grade in English---,
can I have this class?

T: No. (p. 11)

This is yet another example of the importance the N places on grammar. She wrongly assumes that the teacher's request for clarification was in response to grammatical failure on her part, so she makes a "correction." Note that everything in the two sentences remains the same, save for the change in tense from the correct past to the incorrect present. For her, negative cognitive feedback has the destabilizing effect that Vigil and Oller predict. Although it is counterproductive in this case, negative cognitive feedback is of the essence in cases where errors occur because it may lead to their eradication.

The poor learner usually reacts to negative cognitive feedback by supplying additional information:

(14) (Talking about learning English in Hong Kong.)

G: I know English.
We also have English, but it's very simple
like "boy," "woman," like something like that.

T: What...what do you mean by "boy," "woman"?

G: Like, uh, in a Chinese, in a Chinese school
I was...Oh, let me see how to say that.
I learned Chinese school in Hong Kong, but they
also have English course.
It's, uh, very simple //English

T: //Uh huh

G: It's like a simple word "a boy," "woman,"
or like, uh, A, B, C, D, //E

T: //Yeah

G: like something like that. (p.17)

Notice that above G makes no effort to correct the grammar of her utterances. What she does do is to try to provide a broader context into which most of her original utterance, expanded with additional information, is embedded. Thus it appears that for the poor language learner even negative cognitive feedback fails to have the destabilizing effect on fossilized language forms that Vigil and Oller predict.

Now we must say a word about two terms we have used without a precise definition: repair and correction. This is a distinction made by Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977): "The term 'correction' is commonly understood to refer to the replacement of an 'error' or 'mistake' by what is 'correct'. The phenomena of repair we are addressing, however, are neither contingent upon error, nor limited to

replacement" (p. 363). In other words, repair encompasses all forms of adjustment in speech output.

So far it has not been necessary to distinguish between repair and correction. Correction is a grammatical concept, and our analysis has dealt with speech function. In terms of speech function, it does not matter how a conversational act is expressed; what counts is the speaker's intended meaning and the listener's interpretation of that meaning. In this chapter this distinction gains relevance because the good learner (N) makes both repairs and corrections, while the poor learner (G) makes repairs only. For her corrections are rare.

With regard to neutral cognitive feedback, both the good and the poor learner apparently interpret it as positive, since the typical reaction of both learners (and incidentally of all other learners in the sample) is to agree or disagree with the interviewer's confirmation:

(15) (Explaining why she speaks only Chinese at home.)

N: Yeah, because my parents speak Chinese=

T: =Yeah=

N: =so I only speak English at school.

T: Your parents don't speak Chi...English at all?

N: No. They only speak Chinese. (p. 21)

(16) G: I work in xxxxxxxxx College, in Bursar Office.

T: Oh, you work in the Bursar's Office?

G: Yeah, so I learn. (p. 9)

In (16) G again fails to correct the phrase "Bursar Office". The difference between the two learners is that N usually only agrees or disagrees with the interviewer's confirmation, sometimes qualifying it with a short utterance, while G after agreeing or disagreeing, provides lots of additional information without regard to grammatical correctness. (16) above continues in (17):

(17) G: I don't have college work-study, but I like to practice my English. I want to learn=

T: =Yeah=

G: =so I went to, I get to the second floor 24th building=

T: =Yeah=

G: =and I ask somebody: "May I get the college work-study in the school?" So, you know, the lady is so nice and she gives to me=

T: =Yeah.

G: I start from this semester. (pp. 9-10)

When she does agree by simply attempting to repeat her interlocutor's utterance, his utterance is reshaped by her own grammar to the point where there is little resemblance between the input and output:

(18) G: I wait for my first check after six week when I work.

T: Oh, before you get paid?

G: Yeah, before I pay. (p. 11)

This is not a random occurence because the same error recurs later in the same transcript:

(19) T: You can talk to people and practice.

G: And I pay

T: And you're getting paid too!

G: Yeah, (laughing) and I recognize now the many, you know, foreign student and American... (p. 14)

(17) illustrates how freely G volunteers information. There are also times when N produces long monologues but N is a bit more selective on the topics she will discuss; if she is interested in something, or if it concerns her deeply, she will talk a great deal, but if she appears to consider a topic not overwhelmingly significant, she will respond with a single word answer. G seems to provide lengthy answers to most questions and on most topics. This is why her speech output is proportionately the greatest of all the students in the sample.

Initiating Questions and Repairs. So far we have discussed how good and poor learners respond to questions and how they react to the interviewer's repairs (negative and neutral cognitive feedback), but what of their own initiation of

questions and repairs? We have seen that the poorest language learner produced the greatest number of conversational acts per turn. Does this mean that her participation in conversation was in some way superior?

The answer is an unequivocal no. Although she produced the greatest proportion of conversational acts, almost all of the non-responsives in her output were assertives. In fact, 63% of all her utterances were assertives. She asked absolutely no questions at all. It could be that she had nothing to ask about. Another possibility is that in the effort to present a picture of being a good, knowledgeable communicator she may have considered questions to be out of place, since questions carry an implicit admission that the questioner lacks certain knowledge. Therefore, by avoiding questions a facade of superior competence could be projected. The great volume of assertives on her part may be an affirmation of her knowledge of English. By providing lots of unsolicited information, she may in effect be saying that she is like a native speaker of the language in terms of communication skills. Questions, after all, can lead to less familiar topics and she is trying to stay on solid ground: there is enough uncertainty in the interviewer's questions without introducing additional uncertainty with questions of her own.

She did however, ask for confirmation one time, but this confirmation was rhetorical in nature since she answered the question before the interviewer had a chance to respond.

(20) T: Now, you said you don't speak English at home with your family, but what about with your friends?

G: Friend?

Uh, some of them I speak English.

T: Yes

G: Uh, some of them I speak Chinese. (p. 25)

In this instance the interviewer's question was not in canonical form, so she apparently felt justified in asking for confirmation of her understanding. Whatever the cause, the fact remains that this is the only time when she asked for information form the interviewer.

In N's speech, Responsives represent 39% of the conversational acts, Assertives 51%, Requestives 7%, and Repair Initiations 3%. In G's speech, on the other hand, Responsives represent 36% of her conversational acts, Assertives 63%, Requestives 0%, and Repair Initiations 0.5% (Table 12). Although N produced fewer Assertives than G, her speech, nonetheless, resembles that of a native speaker of English more than does G's because she does the things that native speakers do in conversation--solicit information and ideas, and make sure they are understood and that they themselves understand what is communicated to them. N's questions elicit lengthy explanations from the interviewer. Thus, in Seliger's (1977) terms, N is a high input generator. G does not initiate exchanges but she provides long monologues to the interviewer's

initiations. She is, therefore, a low input generator, but a high output generator.

It appears that the good second language learner both solicits input and generates output. The poor language learner generates lots of output on the basis of little solicited input. In order to acquire the grammar of a second language, the learner must have the raw materials of that language to work with. With little solicited second language input, the learner has no choice but to rely on her first language for the building blocks of communication, as well as communication strategies typical of pidgin languages. As a result she progresses in the second language slower than might otherwise be expected.

Self-Initiated Repairs. We saw earlier that good and poor learners differ in how they respond to other-initiated repairs and corrections. The next question we consider is how they differ in terms of self-initiation of repair and correction--in other words, how well they "monitor" their own speech output.

Both learners initiate self-repairs, but they differ in their approaches. N uses two basic strategies--false starts and corrections, while G's strategies fall under the category of word-searches (cf. Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977). False starts occur when the learner comes to a dead end with an utterance she is attempting to express. They give

her a second chance to attempt to express the same idea in different words, or to express it more effectively:

(21) T: Did you do well on the composition in class today?

N: I don't know. I...first I wrote at home and I turn over, and then today I just wrote it in class. (p. 1)

(22) N: I have one question.
I wanna...I want, you know, Sunday, do I write a capital letter or small letters? (p. 9)

(23) N: You said, like you know, when you make up the grades, right you said, the midterm counts, or only...you only count the final grades? (p. 30)

Corrections occur when the learner realizes that something is wrong grammatically:

(24) N: You know, the...my counselor talk to the Chairman, and then, you know, he wrote me the letter and then for the...to the registrator. (p. 12)

N's self-initiated repairs deal by and large with making structural changes. Furthermore, her repairs supersede the trouble source; that is, the trouble source loses its conversational significance.

Although in G's corpus there are a few examples of self-initiated grammatical correction, the great majority of her

self-initiated repairs are concerned with semantic difficulties. One of her repair strategies is replacing a single word in an utterance while keeping the syntax constant:

(25) G: I want to learn=
T: =Yeah=
G: =so I went to, I get to the second floor 24th building. (p. 10)

(26) G: I can't talk, you know, I can't explain my meaning //and my idea,
T: //Yeah
G: and then I was crying. (p. 20)

or by adding a single word to a phrase:

(27) G: They know I have accent, Chinese accent when I speak. (p. 15)

(28) T: And how many hours do you work in the office?
G: Depend, uh, when I have break time, two break time, I go to my office. (p. 13)

When she does make a grammatical correction, the force of the repair source seems to be maintained:

(29) (Describing how she communicates.)
G: ...I can't speak the right sound for the word, and I write down the word, I know how to spell it, //and I tell them.
T: //Uh huh

G: They teach me how to...how many syllable with this word and how to spell it'//like this.

T: //Yeah. (p. 15)

There are also times when she cannot find the right word, so she uses an indefinite filler such as "something," "some," "like that," etc., leaving the interpretation of the utterance to the listener's imagination:

(30) G: Somebody ask me, "How are you?" I don't know what he talking //about like that,

T: //Yeah

G: so I have to learn. (p. 21)

(31) (Describing her English class in Hong Kong.)

G: ...he speak Chinese. //That's why we don't have

T: //Hm

G: practice. //We don't

T: //Oh, I see.

G: We can not hear uh very good and uh something else. (p. 18)

The use of fillers is perhaps indicative of G's willingness to forsake precise meaning for communication. Communication is certainly possible even without language, but language--its phonology, grammar, and vocabulary--lends to communication a measure of precision unattainable otherwise.

Parenthetic expressions are another technique for improving speech output. For N they represent nearly 35% of

her utterances. Both learners use parenthetic expressions, especially when reporting direct quotations. Paraenthetic expressions are a means of stalling for time, and they give the learner a chance to recall what had been said and to repair utterances in progress:

(32) N: And then she said that, "Did you ask me,"
you know, "how to do a term," I mean,
" a research paper before?"
I said "Yes," you know,
"that paper was about a college education." (p. 16)

(33) (Describing her cousin's treatment of her.)
G: "Why, why you don't understand?"
You know, "Hong Kong also has English school.
Why do you come?"
"I don't know," you know,
"My mother send me to the best school.
I don't know," you know.
"I was small."
T: Yeah.
G: "I don't have to go," you know, "my power to,"
you know, //"to go."
T: //To go. (pp. 21-22)

In N's speech the use of parenthetic expressions is much more pervasive. They appear to be a way of gaining additional time to plan her next utterance:

(34) N: I learn Spanish in nineth grade.
I start, you know, eigth grade in here,
and they, you know, give me Spanish in nineth grade.
(p. 25)

In word searches G uses fewer parenthetic expressions, and instead relies on uh's as a stall:

(35) G: They are uh very nice;
they teach me. (p. 15)

(36) G: We cannot hear very uh, good
and uh something else. (p. 18)

G initiates self-repairs to clarify what she means to say, while N tends to repair the structural aspects of her speech. The poor learner is concerned with meaning, while the good learner is concerned with grammar.

Overlapping. Another area where the two learners differ is in terms of turn allocation. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) in their analysis of the organization of turn taking point out that in conversation "Overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time" and that "Occurances of more than one speaker at a time are common, but brief" (p. 706). Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson present a complete model for turn taking. Here, however, we will only consider the significance of overlapping turns and the light that sheds on the communicative strategies of the two learners we are comparing.

The amount of interruption (i.e., overlapping) on the part of the learner may be indicative of how willing she is to express her ideas, to take risks, to act like a native speaker, to communicate. The important question for us is whether the willingness to communicate leads to linguistic development. If it does, then the learner who displays such willingness should have a superior knowledge of grammar. If it does not, then the learner who is eager to communicate should not differ from the learner who appears to be less eager.

The overlapping utterances can be divided into two types: simple acknowledgements and non-acknowledgements. We use a privative definition for the second type because, as Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) point out, overlaps are "repaired" when one of the two speakers exits giving up his turn. Thus it is frequently difficult to judge whether an overlapping utterance which is abandoned in midstream expresses any proposition. The best we can do is to decide whether a given overlap is an acknowledgement or not, because acknowledgements are the most common type of overlapping utterances.

Table 13 summarizes the use of overlap by both the students and the interviewer. N produced five overlapping acknowledgements, but no overlapping non-acknowledgements at all. G, on the other hand, produced only two overlapping acknowledgements but eight overlapping non-acknowledgements. Non-acknowledgemtnts are far more important because they are

attempts at expressing propositions, while acknowledgements by definition are non-propositional.

Table 13

The occurence of overlapping

	Student Overlap		Teacher Overlap	
Student	Acknowl-edgements	Non-Acknowl-edgements	Acknowl-edgements	Non-Acknowl-edgements
N	5	0	3	2
G	2	8	9	9

Student overlap = student interferes with teacher's turn.

Teacher overlap = teacher interferes with student's turn.

Since N, the good learner, produced no non-acknowledgement overlaps, we will only examine the performance of G, the poor learner. What is most prominent about her communicative style is her eagerness to talk. She does not wait for her interlocutor to finish but jumps in at the first opportunity[4]:

(37) T: Are they paying you a lot of money?

G: No.

Is two, two dollar ninety for one hour.

T: Two dollars and ninety //cents an hour?

//<u>It's cheap</u>. (p. 14)

Notice that she interrupts at a point where the significant information has been conveyed: the remainder, "cents an hour," is conversationally redundant.

G jealously guards her right to speak, even when the interviewer merely attempts to acknowledge, at a transitional place, that he is following her, she immediately fires off her next utterance:

(38) G: I do TAP, uh, like now.
Like before register.
They had some student, many student to talking about the problem is in TAP, BEOG, something.
T: //Yeah.
G: //<u>They</u> have problem and then they come to my office.
T: //Yeah.
G: //<u>and</u> ask some.
I have to find a sheet what they have having is some kind sheet for the government. (p. 12)

She is so anxious to communicate that she even provides answers or completes the interviewer's utterance before he has a chance to finish:

(39) T: When did you start coming to X-- College?
G: I, last year. It's, uh, June?
T: In //June?
G: //<u>June.</u>
T: Oh, you came here in the summer?
G: Oh, is not sum, after summer.
T: Oh, //September?
G: //<u>Spring</u>. (p. 3)

In the second overlap, she is trying so desperately to stay ahead of the interviewer that she gets the season wrong.

In talking to G, the interviewer is also responsible for lots of overlaps. Most of them result from his wrongly anticipating that G will relinguish her turn:

(40) G: Oh, because last semester see the B.
//So I know this room.
T: //Oh, G B, yeah. (p. 1)

(41) G: I want to learn English.
//and have...
T: //<u>That's a</u> good way to do it. (p.14)

(42) T: Now you have to pass the writing test=
G: =Yeah.
//I know.
T: //<u>Which</u> is more difficult than the reading test. (p. 5)

The poor language learner is obviously getting a lot more practice speaking than the good learner, but this practice is having little impact on her grammatical development. Thus it appears that practice in communicating is important, but not necessarily sufficient, for successful second language acquisition.

Some teaching methodologies, in fact, recommend delaying oral practice in the initial stages. Asher's (1969) Total Physical Response Technique is perhaps the best known.

Rather than responding orally, learners perform physical actions, such as opening a window, moving a desk, etc. A similar method, developed by Postovsky (1970) allows the learner to respond in writing. The major argument in favor of delaying oral practice is the claim that "requiring learners to produce material they have not yet stored in their memory will lead to language interference and overload of short-term memory" (Gary, 1978:190-191). This indeed appears to be the case with G, who expresses herself voluminously (thus presumably practicing), but has little to show for it in terms of overall development.

Summary. We began this chapter by asking what "good" and "poor" learners do in conversation that leads to either success or failure in the acquisition of grammatical structures. Although previous studies have inventoried a number of learner strategies, we have found, through the analysis of conversations, that not all the strategies may be of equal importance for all learners.

The amount of communication appears to be less important than it is sometimes touted to be. The poor learner's problems stem from an over-reliance o the communication strategy to the virtual exclusion of focusing on form and to a lesser extent, searching for meaning (cf. Rubin, 1975). These strategies have counterparts in language competence. It can be assumed that the use of a certain strategy will lead to the

strengthening of its complementary component in language; for example, paying attention to form will lead to grammatical development and being willing to communicate will result in improved communication.

A good language learner utilizes all three strategies and thus makes increments in all three interdependent aspects of language simultaneously. Meanings are expressed through forms which in turn facilitate communication. The closer the fit among the three components, the more effective a communicator will a learner presumably be. When one of these far exceeds the others, trouble arises. For example, a learner (or teaching method) who focuses solely on form may acquire an archival knowledge of the rules of the second language, each separate from the other, with no practical means for expressing meanings in communication. Another possibility is a one-way translator who learns to recognize meanings in a second language, but who cannot himeslf express meanings in oral communication. The third possibility is the learner who has a strong desire to communicate in the second language and learns to communicate through submersion in it, but who develops a pidginized system which may differ greatly from the target language.

Why doesn't the use of language in communication always lead to a balanced linguistic system? The answer lies in the nature of the interrelationship among form, meaning, and

communication. "In our native language there is a fusion of form and meaning. We take form for granted and focus on meaning not form" (Stern, 1980:56). The second language learner who is successful in communicating may also take form for granted. Since she is understood by others, she assumes that the forms she uses are adequate, that there is not need for change. Such a learner perceives her competence in the second language to be better than it actually is. Successful communication gives a false feeling of security to the learner, the feeling that she has in her native language, and this leads to the cessation of further grammatical development, i.e., fossilization. Different learners appear to reach this realization at different points in their development.

With regard to the impact of communication on second language learning, what seems to matter most is not <u>how much</u> but <u>how</u> a learner communicates. The good language learner uses communication as a learning tool: She pays attention to the structural information in her interlocutor's speech. She solicits information and repairs from her interlocutor. She corrects her own utterances. She is willing to play the role of a "linguistic child." The poor learner is so engrossed in communicating that she seems oblivious to all else: She turns a deaf ear to the structural information in her interlocutor's speech. She is concerned with exchanging ideas, not learning grammar. She volunteers lots of information. She wants to be a

communicating adult. That privilege, however, has to be earned. It appears that one cannot learn a second language without working at it.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The strategies of "good" and "poor" learners were first inventoried and comprehensively treated by Rubin (1975) and Stern (1980). However, their strategies were apparently derived from classroom experience and observation, while our data were gathered in one-to-one interviews; consequently, certain of their strategies may not even surface. People often tend to behave one way in public and another way in a more private setting. Thus a person who appears to be uncommunicative in the classroom may prove to be quite a talker in an interview, while another person who is a showman in the classroom may feel less compelled to perform for an audience of one.

[2] No measures for quantifying fossilization have been developed; however, it is fair to assume that as grammatical accuracy increases, fossilization decreases. This assumption is justified in our case because our students by and large learned what they know of grammar from conversation; such an assumption may not be warranted for people who have learned English in the classroom, where many of the structures and vocabulary words on our tests are explicity taught. Our findings with regard to grammar may hold analogous implications for fossilization. Although none of the students in any way approach native speaker competence either in communication or grammar, their grammar scores increase with length of residence. There were significant correlations between the number of years in the United States and the structure test and dictation (r_S=.834, $p < .01$) and years in the United States and vocabulary (r_S=.667, $p < .05$). These results imply that fossilization decreases with increased length of residence, and presumed exposure to and use of English.

[3] Vigil and Oller's positive, neutral, and negative cognitive feedback correspond roughly to Canonical Responses, Confirmations, and Clarification Questions in our analysis.

[4] Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) point out that overlaps occur as simultaneous starts, and at projected possible completion or "transition-relevance places." The overlaps in our data occured under similar circumstances. However, it is rare that two speakers begin at precisely the same moment; therefore, the individual who begins first is placed above the one who begins a split second later.

Chapter IX

CONCLUSION

We undertook this research with three goals in mind: to test the hypothesis that the speech of learners who talk a great deal would also be most accurate grammatically; to develop a measure of communicative effectiveness in interactions between native speakers and non-native speakers; and in general to examine the nature of communication by speakers of a second language. Finally, we looked at the conversational strategies of two learners to determine what it is precisely that these learners do that can account for their differential achievement. Of course, our findings are limited in scope to persons possessing incomplete linguistic systems who, however, appear to be subject (qualitatively, through perhaps not quantitatively) to the same rules, conventions, and forces in conversation as native speakers.

One of the amazing phenomena in communication is its unpredictability, which is what makes the use of conventional tests to measure communicative effectiveness all but impossible. However, the constant flow of conversation back and

forth provides clues as to how well one or the other of the participants is communicating; thus, as we have shown, the communicative success of one can be gauged from the performance of the other. When one of the participants is a non-native speaker of the language of communication, the situation is ripe for communication failure. In such conversations lengthy "negotiations" often ensue to ensure successful transmission of the message.

One of our findings that deserves notice is that the ability to communicate in a second language may be independent of a learner's grammatical knowledge of that language. Many learners manage to become fluent, comprehensible speakers of a second language without acquiring all of its grammatical subtleties, while other learners acquire both communicative skill and grammatical knowledge from mere exposure to the language. Thus it would appear that some learners are able to use communication as a means for learning the target language, while others derive little, if any, such benefit from communication. This finding in some ways accords with Tarone's (1980) distinction between communication strategies and learning strategies. When using the former, "A speaker desires to communicate a meaning x to a listener," while using the latter the "basic motivation is not to communicate, but to learn" (Tarone, 1980:419). This does not mean to say that we acquire language only through learning strategies or that communication

strategies will necessarily lead to learning: "While learning strategies result from the use of communication strategies, it does not have to. So we cannot assume that all CS are also LS" (Tarone, 1980:421).

The fallacy in much of the research on second language acquisition today is that it assumes implicitly that all learners of like circumstances will exhibit similar patterns of acquisition. We found that some learners managed tc take advantage of communication as a learning tool while others did not. In the last chapter we scrutinized the communication strategies of two learners, both of whom were quite successful at communicating, but only one of whom was successful at converting communicative success into grammatical achievement. It would seem as though some learners are statisfied with communicative success, while others strive for grammatical correctness. Some learners are sensitive to the structural differences between their output and the target language, while others are oblivious to the differences and do not even seem to perceive them. They are satisfied so long as their interlocutors comprehend the message.

Our examination of the strategies of good and poor learners reveals that some individuals may lack the capacity to make inductive generalizations about the second language from exposure to it, although they may use it daily as a means of communication. It appears that once some learners

are able to communicate with speakers of the target language, they no longer feel compelled to continue altering their grammars toward target language norms. Children acquiring their native language also begin by communicating and only later acquire the form of language. The reason why children adjust their grammars until they coincide with adult standards and why many adults do not may lie in the functions of language for children and for adults. According to Halliday (1974) language serves two functions for children: mathetic, as a tool for learning about the world and presumably about language itself, and pragmatic, as a tool for getting things done. With maturation these functions are transformed so that the learner's ability to use language to learn language wanes. When an adult begins learning a second language, he still has to use language to get things done, but not all learners may recognize the need for learning the language perfectly because they have already learned one language and the mathetic function for them may have lost its raison d'être.

Although we have shown that there are individual differences among learners, we cannot catagorically state what the causes are, but we can at least point in the direction of a possible solution. Only more research will bring about a definitive resolution to these issues. However, at the present time we are reasonably sure that it is not only psychological or social distance at the root of the problem. If anything,

the reverse would appear to be the case; of the two learners we compared in Chapter VIII, the poor achiever would appear to be more positively oriented towards Americans, is more outgoing, has no qualms about taking risks and making errors. A similar pattern was observed by Beebe (1980) who also found that both high risk takers and low risk takers fared less well than learners who fell between the two extremes. Our good learner was a moderate risk taker like Beebe's subjects. In our sample, we also had a low risk taker (U) who was a poor learner.

More research has to be done to identify the causes of the observed differences. Could it be that it is differences in the various components of language aptitude (whatever that might be) that are responsible for the disparities? Do some learners have better grammatical sensitivity, while other learners have better phonological or lexical sensitivity, or communicative skill, and they excel in these areas? Or could it be that there are various combinations of these components? These are questions that will only be answered through further research.

It is difficult to say for certain whether there exists a causal relationship between the conversational strategies of the learners and grammatical achievement, but enough circumstancial evidence has been found to make this hypothesis at least plausible. We have found a great deal of individual

variation among persons of similar circumstances and evidence that variation in communicative style may have an impact on the degree to which each acquires the second language. Learners who focus solely on communicating their intentions, communicate fairly successfully but they do not make much progress in acquiring the grammatical structures of the language, while learners who in addition to communication display an awareness of the structural properties of language are most successful in the acquisition of grammar. On the other hand, learners who show little inclination to communicate and little awareness of structure show little progress in grammatical development and conversational success. More research has to be done in this area, especially with longitudinal studies where the development of two or more matched learners can be followed from beginning to advanced stages.

In recent years, researchers who have encountered poor language learners (Shapira; 1978, Hatch 1978; Schumann, 1978; Butterworth and Hatch, 1978, among others) have resorted to accounting for the lack of progress by such leanrers in terms of affective factors. Although affect may represent an important aspect of second language learning, it is not by any means the sole cause of success or failure for all learners because, all things being equal, individuals exhibit different rates of learning and different levels of eventual achievement.

In our study informants were selected who came from similar backgrounds and could be expected to have been subject to like psychological and social distances; therefore, any differences among them could not be explained in terms of psychological or social factors.

The poor learner, G, whom we focused on in the last chapter shares a number of characteristics with Zoila, a 25-year-old Guatamalan woman studied by Shapira (1978) and Alberto, a 33-year-old Costa Rican man studied by Schumann (1978), both of whom are said to be affected negatively by social and psychological distance. Like G, Zoila is a fluent speaker of English who usually succeeds in communicating her intentions: "In terms of communicating...Zoila gets along very well in her limited sphere of contact with English speakers. She is a fluent speaker of English, albeit her production of morphemes leaves much to be desired" (Hatch, 1978: 246). Moreover, her fluency has little positive effect on her language development; in fact, it may have a negative influence on it: "She interprets her development as evidence of progress in the acquisition of English. Her daily interaction with English speakers constantly reinforces her feeling that her English is good enough since it is accepted, i.e., understood" (Shapira, 1978:253). Like G, Zoila fails to take advantage of potential learning opportunities:

One of the notions of conversational analysis in second language research is that learners are sensitive to input and correction. But while Zoila is sensitive to almost everything else in conversation, she is not sensitive to the language model, as can be seen in these adjacent pairs:

Shapira: It makes no difference.
Zoila: Anyway, it no making difference.

Zoila: ...very /sɛnsər/.
Shapira: Sincere?
Zoila: Sincero. Sincero?
Shapira: Sincere.
Zoila: Yeah. (Hatch, 1978:246)

Schumann's subject Alberto similarly developed a certain degree of communicative skill, without concomitant growth in grammar. Shapira and Schumann, as we noted earlier, speculate that it is social and psychological distance that are responsible for the lack of acquisition of the formal properites of English by their learners. This is not an unreasonable hypothesis in view of the fact that they had no other learners from similar social and psychological circumstances to compare their subjects with. Affect has been shown time and again, especially by Wallace Lambert and his colleagues, to be a significant contributor to success or failure in second language learning. However, their studies were made with large numbers of subjects and the results presented in terms of mean values. It is well known that the averaging of data may reveal certain tendencies within a population, but it also tends to mask individual differences; that is, it often fails to explain the apparently anomalous behavior of individual subjects. "On the one hand, some individuals seem to be able

to acquire foreign languages easily and quickly, even when not particularly well motivated to do so. On the other hand, some individuals have marked difficulty in acquiring a foreign language, even when highly motivated and interested in doing so" (Carroll, 1981:85).

The two students we discussed in Chapter VIII, N and G, came from like backgrounds, lived in the same neighborhood, had been friends for some time, were well motivated, and had learned to communicate quite ll in English, yet only one had succeeded in developing grammatical accuracy. Carroll would probably say that they differ in language learning aptitude. It is difficult to say whether it is language aptitude that is at the root of this apparent anomaly since there are no language aptitude tests for native speakers of Chinese. However, clear differences in the conversational strategies of these learners emerged which happen to correspond with success or failure in the acquisition of grammar. G seems to be following what Selinker (1972) calls a "communication strategy" where the sole priority of the learner is to exchange information. N also is eager to communicate, but she displays a certain sensitivity to the structural properties of the medium of communication.

Further Study. Since this study was conducted with only nine participants, it will be necessary to replicate it with larger groups to make certain that the generalizations

we make are not spurious chance occurences. We have stated our procedures as explicitly as was possible so that others may make use of them independently. Larger numbers would probably reveal a whole spectrum of learner types, compared with out three-way division.

In addition to larger numbers of learners we need a larger number of interviewers, as well as, different types of interviewers. Under similar conditions interviewer differences should not be substancial. We examined two transcripts between native speakers of English and non-native speakers and found similar patterns of interaction and repair as in our transcripts. The first conversation was between a female ESL teacher and a male speaker of Chinese, in which he was describing his experiences on a job interview. Whenever she did not understand something or was not provided sufficient information, she used the same type of clarification questions and confirmation requests as found in our study. The second interview is an excerpt from The MacNeil/Lehrer Report, a television news program, in which the reporter, Robert MacNeil, was interviewing a Soviet émigré, Yuri Agayev. MacNeil used repair initiations in four out of eleven of his turns. Agayev apparently lacked the linguistic sophistication in English to provide sufficient information in response to MacNeil's queries. We feel that so long as the participants are genuinely engaged in the exchange of ideas they will resort to the same types of repair strategies that we observed.

Longitudinal work should be undertaken on the development of communication in a second language. Do learners follow one pattern or do they go through stages of development? Does grammatical development diverge from communicative development right from the start, or does this occur at some intermediate or advanced stage? In the beginning stages, can second language learners be compared with children acquiring a first language who are referential or expressive (Nelson, 1973)? In other words, do some second language learners begin with small units and then build up, while others begin with longer, grammatically well-formed chunks?

Does language background make a difference in communicative style? We have only dealt with learners who speak one language; however, intuitively we feel that in one-to-one conversations the same learner types will be represented, among speakers of other languages, though perhaps in different proportions. That is to say, members of certain language backgrounds may tend to be more or less talkative than members of other language backgrounds. In public places this appears to be the case, but it may be quite different in a private conversation. As we noted earlier, in the classroom, it was rare for any of our learners to ask questions or volunteer information without being called upon.

Conversations between two learners should be investigated using the techniques developed in this research. Do learners use the same communication and repair strategies with

one another as they do with native speakers and native speakers use with them? In this instance data are needed from truly communicative situations.

Appendix A

Coding Instructions

INSTRUCTIONS You will try to identify the speech function of utterances in extracts from conversations. Try to classify each as one of four types: Requestives (RQ), Responsives (RS), Assertives (AS), or Repairs (RP):

Requestives (RQ)--There are two types: Requests for information (questions) and Requests for action (commands).

			A	B
(1)	A:	Did you do your assignment:	RQ	
	B:	Yes, I did.		RS
(2)	A:	Bring your homework tomorrow.	RQ	
	B:	Okay.		RS

Responsives (RS) usually follow Requestives as in B's turns above. When a Response turn consists of several conversational acts, count the "head" as the RS; classify the other acts as AS, RQ, or RP.

(3)	A:	How did you do on the composition in class today?	RQ	
	B:	I don't know.		RS
		I...First I wrote at home,		AS
		and then I turn over,		AS
		and then today I wrote it in class		AS

Assertives (AS) express unsolicited propositions. They function as descriptions, identifications, evaluations, explanations, reports, rules, claims, etc.

			A	B
(4)	B:	He know how to speak, but he don't know...		AS
		Usually, he don't know how to spell the word.		AS
	A:	Yeah.	(ak)	
	B:	All he use is that saying, that's all, to speak.		AS

Repair Initiations (RP) indicate that something is amiss in a conversation. The hearer does not understand or believe what he has heard, is not sure whether he heard correctly, is dissatisfied with what he hears, so he wants to be reassured. There are two major types--clarification questions and confirmation requests.

(5)	B:	I want to have any ideas at that time.		AS
	A:	You what?	RP	
	B:	I don't have any idea about that writing.		RS
(6)	B:	They didn't mail me a letter.		AS
	A:	They didn't mail you a letter?	RP	
	B:	They supposed to...I thought they supposed to.		RS
(7)	B:	It's like English, you know.		AS
		You write it down too the way you speak,		AS
		but it's not proper when you write what you say.		AS

A: Uh huh. So= (ak)

B: =So same thing as Cantonese. AS

A: You mean, you write Cantonese and Mandarin the same way, but you pronounce them differently? RP

B: Yeah. RS

A number of minor acts are not considered significant because they are non-propositional; they serve merely to regulate the flow of conversation without significantly contributing to it; for example: parenthetic expressions (pe) "you know," boundary markers (bm) "Now,...," and acknowledgements (ak) "uh-huh," "Yeah." There are also non-verbal responses (nvrs), such as nods and smiles, and responses which are uninterpretable (untp).

Appendix B

Transcript Excerpts

0

		A	B
A:	And, when did you start studying English?		
B:	When came.		
A:	Oh, when you came, when you came here?		
B:	No.		
	I came here...I started like...		
A:	You=		
B:	=I came here when I was like four years old.		
A:	Yeah		
B:	I started the kinder...		
A:	Oh, when you started...		
	You didn't study at all in Hong Kong?		
B:	No.		
A:	Oh, now, when you went to grammar school and high		
	school, did you have a bilingual program?		
	Biling...Where you had some courses in Chinese?		
B:	Yes, I have reading class in Chinese.		
	But they don't consider it.		
A:	You had a reading class in what--Chinese?		
B:	No, I don't have those.		
	I don't have no bilingual.		
A:	In high school or grammar school you didn't?		
B:	No.		

L

		A	B
B:	My friend she's uh..majoring in language		
A:	Yeah		
B:	and uh...she...her mother was...her mother speaks		
	Mandarin, uh huh,		
	and, so learn to speak it.		
	She took it in schools,		
	and she wants to learn Cantonese also.		
	She's trying to learn from me,		
	and she try to ask me "What is...how come it's		
	this, how come it's that?"		
A:	Yeah		
B:	And...I can't find mean...you know, reason.		
A:	And you don't know?		
B:	No.		
	//Because it's just the way it is, no?		
A:	//Yeah		
B:	So...sometimes English is like that also=		
A:	=Yeah		
B:	you know.		
	You ask why, and maybe sometimes no rules work		
A:	Well, people usually don't know the rules.		
	Even though when they talk, they use the rules.		
	But they don't know what the rules are.		
B:	Yeah //out		
A:	//They can't tell you the rules.		
B:	But they don...if they have the rules, they should		
	have uh...the book. You know...books, you know.		
A:	Uh huh		
B:	But uh Cantonese, I doubt if they have any.		

K

		A	E
B:	Always speech in the class.		
A:	Excuse me?		
B:	Always speech in the class.		
A:	Yeah. You give speeches in class?		
B:	Yeah.		
A:	Who's your teacher?		
B:	L--, Mrs. L--.		
A:	L-- ?		
	And which course is it?		
	//Speech		
B:	//Ten-ten.		
A:	Ten-ten?		
B:	Yes, the problem is=		
A:	=And you have to give speeches?		
B:	Yeah.		
A:	Do you like doing it?		
B:	No, I don't think I like it.		
A:	No. Have //you given any?		
B:	//Maybe Chinese I like that better.		
A:	You'd like to give your speech in Chinese?		
B:	Yeah.		
A:	Give it in Chinese! (Laughing)		
B:	How? (laughing)		
	How do they understand?		

N

	A	B
B: Can I ask you one question?		
A: What?		
B: If I got a failing grade in Math 1, can I have this		
class? you know, right?		
A: Hm?		
B: If I get a failing grade in Math 1, can I have this		
class?		
A: No.		
But I think your grade was changed, wasn't it?		
B: I don't know that.		
You know, the...my counselor talk to the //Chairman		
A: //Yeah		
B: And then, you know, he wrote me the letter and then		
for the...to the registrator.		
I don't know what grade I get now.		
A: They're gonna change your grade, I think.		
B: Now you know, I have the letter that M-- wrote for		
me (unintelligible) register.		
A: Yeah. What does it say?		
B: (Giving letter to A)		
A: (Looking at letter) Well, we're not gonna worry		
about that because I thought M-- was gonna change		
your grade.		
Didn't the counselor say he told Prof.-- that		
M-- was gonna change your grade?		
B: I don't know.		

C

	A	B
A: Now. Your native language is..?		
B: Chinese.		
A: Which Chinese?		
B: Canton.		
A: Cantonese?		
B: (Nods "yes")		
A: And you're from...?		
B: Hong Kong.		
A: Hong Kong.		
You know...I...you know, all these students come in		
to talk to me,		
and they all say Hong Kong.		
B: Yeah.		
A: And I have one, only one who's not from Hong Kong.		
She's from Taiwan,		
and she speaks Mandarin.		
//They don't speak Cantonese.		
B: //Uh huh, is it...		
A: Do you speak Mandarin?		
B: A little bit.		
A: A little bit?		
B: Uh hum.		
A: And how many years have you been in the United		
States?		
B: Four and a half, I think.		

G

		A	B
B:	I work in X--College in Bursar Office.		
A:	Oh, you work in the Bursar's //Office?		
B:	//Yeah, so I learn.		
	I don't have college work study,		
	but I like to practice my English.		
	I want to learn=		
A:	=Yeah=		
B:	=so I went to...I get to		
	the second floor of the Y--Building=		
A:	=Yeah=		
B:	=and		
	I asked somebody, "May I get the college work		
	study in the school?"		
	So you know, the lady is so nice		
	and she gives to me=		
A:	=Yeah		
B:	I start this semester.		
A:	Oh, so you started...so you're handling money?		
	You're play=		
B:	=No.		
	I //have to wait for six weeks, no.		
A:	//No, oh...		
	For what?		
B:	I wait for my first check after six weeks when I		
	work.		
A:	Oh, before you get paid?		
B:	Yeah, before I pay.		

E

	A	B
B: And I start English at...when I was in high s...		
junior high school.		
A: You started=		
B: =Yeah=		
A: =in high school?		
B: Uh hum		
A: What class?		
B: Actually, you know what, actually we learn the		
basic thing.		
Like you know, the wor...and how to like make a		
sentence and //how you explain.		
A: //Yeah		
B In P.S. 10 something=		
A: =Yeah=		
B: =P.S. school, right.		
A: Here?		
B: No, not here.		
A: Oh, in Hong Kong?		
B: =Hong Kong, yeah.		
And uhm I only start my one year in junior high		
school,		
then I came here.		

U

		A	B
A:	And when you came here, did you have any ESL classes to teach you English? Classes in English?		
B:	(nods)		
A:	Yeah?		
	Where did you go?		
B:	In the Lower East Side Prep.		
A:	Lower East Side Prep?		
B:	Yeah.		
A:	You didn't go to any other high school?		
B:	No.		
A:	Oh, you went to Lower East Side Prep right away?		
B:	When...when I came here, I go to Lower East Side Prep.		
A:	Yeah, uh huh. And did you have any bilingual classes?		
B:	Yeah.		
A:	In Chinese and...?		
B:	Chinese and English...		
A:	Yeah. Which classes did you have in Chinese?		
B:	Some is American class like a society.		
A:	Sociology?		
B:	Sociology and ...math.		
A:	Yeah.		

I

	A	B
A: And which high school did you go to?		
B: Oh, [suwi pa:] high school		
A: Which one?		
B: [suwi pa:]		
A: Shore Park?		
B: Yes.		
A: Oh, in Brooklyn?		
B: Not in Brooklyn.		
Uh in...in the Manhattan, near the Grand Street		
and Es...Essex Street.		
A: By Grand and Essex Street?		
B: Yeah.		
A: And what's the name of it?		
B: [suwi pa:]		
A: [suwi pa] ?		
B: Yes.		
A: What is...how...do you know...how do you spell it?		
B: S-E-W-A-R-D [suwat pa:] P-A-R-K [pa:] , Yeah.		
A: Oh, Seward Park, Seward Park High School.		
Oh, I see.		

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