

Exploring L2 Strategic Competence in Hands-on Creative Tourism Workshops for Ceramics, Metalcraft, and Textile Dyeing

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ABSTRACT

By exploring four observational studies, this paper centers on the L2 strategic competence employed by Japanese craft practitioners while giving technical instructions in English. The research was conducted as part of an on-going project that aims to develop language learning materials to prepare craft professionals to conduct *creative-tourism* workshops with English speaking visitors to Japan. After a review of strategic competence and overview of the project, L2 communicative strategies observed in hands-on workshops are presented and analyzed. A discussion of the study's findings is offered, which focuses on time filler phrases, analogy, superordinate nouns, and alternative methods of appealing for assistance.

Introduction

Giving step-by-step instructions to complete hands-on procedural tasks involves a wide range of factors related to communicative competency. These include transferring explicit knowledge of how to perform the task at hand, producing clear and understandable directive speech acts in accordance with a predetermined sequence, interacting in spoken discourse that spontaneously unfolds when misunderstanding occurs or when clarification is sought, and being sociolinguistically sensitive towards

the person receiving instruction. When circumstances call for instructions to be given in a second or foreign language (L2), reaching communicative outcomes becomes an even greater challenge, especially when real-life language tasks are involved, for example when showing others how to handle materials, operate machinery, or use tools. Successful instruction for such tasks often depends on strategic competence, as defined by Canale and Swain (1980), which compensates for gaps in linguistic knowledge and allows L2 users to cope with breakdowns in communication. Analysis of L2 strategic competence is a useful resource to assess needs and develop learning materials that focus specifically on the challenges of hands-on procedural discourse.

This study explores four observational studies of L2 strategic competence employed by Japanese practitioners of traditional craftwork while giving technical instructions in English. The research centers on how L2 is used within the genre of *creative tourism workshop*, which involves basic hands-on instruction of craft techniques taught to tourists, in brief one-off sessions, so that they may gain appreciation of craft mediums via personal experience. The author is the principle investigator of an on-going project that aims to develop language learning materials to prepare craft professionals to conduct workshops with English speaking visitors to Japan. After a review of strategic competence, the project's background and method of data collection are described. Subsequently, L2 communicative strategies observed in four hands-on workshops, taught by craft majors at a Japanese university of the arts, are presented and analyzed. Finally, the findings of the study are discussed in terms of relevance to the development of learning materials suitable for the project's goals.

Strategic Competence

Strategic competence refers to the ways that language users make adjustments to their message to accommodate the listener in order to deal with problematic communication as it unfolds in real time (Canale, 1983). Coping or survival strategies,

which are used by native-speakers as well as L2 users, include devices such as what we do when we forget a word, how we pause to collect our thoughts, and how to get others to slow down or repeat themselves (Savignon, 1983, p. 40). Strategic competence is meant to function when problems are encountered or when other components of communicative competence are lacking, but it may also be concerned with ways “to enhance the effectiveness of communication deliberately” (Canale, 1983, pp. 10-11), such as the rhetorical effect of deliberately slow speech or stretching syllables in a word for emphasis.

Researchers have divided strategies into two general categories. The first is referred to by several terms: *avoidance* (Brown, 2007), *message adjustment* (Corder, 1981), and *reduction* (Faerch & Kasper, 1983). These types of strategies do not require cooperation between participants, and in most cases, speakers must settle for something less than the original intended meaning of their message. This category can be further divided in three sub-categories: phonological avoidance, topic avoidance, and syntactical/lexical avoidance (Brown, 2007). Phonological avoidance describes a case of the speaker avoiding a known lexical item just because it is hard to pronounce correctly. An exaggerated example of this type of avoidance can be found in the classic cartoon character *Porky Pig*, who often stutters so badly that he gives up and uses an alternative word. Topic avoidance is a purposeful change of subject or feigning comprehension in order to avoid confronting problematic factors, such as a lack of knowledge in the topic. Syntactical/lexical avoidance is when a speaker changes an utterance before it is completed to avoid confronting shortcomings, such as in the utterance: *I drank too much last night and now I have... a.. hang...uh...I don't feel good.*

A second general category found in the literature focuses on *resource expansion strategies* (Corder, 1981), which are also known as *achievement strategies* (Ellis & Barkuizen, 2005), and involve the speaker taking risks to keep the channels of communication open instead of surrendering to the limits of their abilities. These strategies can be cooperative and involve appealing for assistance, either by directly

asking, for example, *How do you say this in English?*, or by code switching or mixing two languages into one coherent utterance. Such strategies may also take a subtle form of pausing in mid-sentence and using non-verbal prompts such as raised eyebrows. Achievement strategies can also be non-cooperative, such as the case when the learner appeals to such devices as a reference source, paraphrasing or circumlocution, approximation, inventing words, or non-linguistic means such as gesture, mime, or drawing (Corder, 1981). Additional achievement orientated strategies include the use of prefabricated patterns, or stock phrases, which are memorized in order to be used in a fitting context. These may be used more like large lexical items than an internalized knowledge of the components of the phrase (Brown, 2007).

Research Background and Data Collection

Research presented in this paper was conducted as part of a project to support efforts of Japanese practitioners of traditional craftwork (*kogei*) to conduct hands-on workshops in English. Such workshops have been integrated in *creative-tourism* efforts, sponsored by public and private initiatives concerned with trade, culture, and tourism (Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade, Industry, 2015). Data was collected at workshops held at Kanazawa College of Art, which offers both undergraduate and graduate courses in *kogei* disciplines.

Adopting Yule's (1997) terms of referential communication tasks, subjects are referred to as: *sender*, who plays the role of workshop instructor, and *receiver*, who follows the *sender's* directions. Four students from the college were recruited to act as senders: a third-year undergraduate majoring in metal craft, a third-year undergraduate majoring in textile dyeing, and two post-graduate students specializing in ceramics. English speaking proficiency between the four varied slightly, but may be roughly estimated as low-intermediate or A2 on the CEFR scale (Council of Europe, 2001). For each workshop there was a single receiver of instruction. For this role, cooperation was

received from two native speakers of English who reside in Japan, one male and one female. Senders and receivers were matched by gender.

Senders were asked to plan one-hour workshops based on similar commercial models promoted by creative tourism initiatives in collaboration with UNESCO's Creative City Network (Kanazawa City, 2016). All four workshops were organized specifically for the purpose of data collection. Each sender was free to choose content and target craft item, which comprised the mediums of metalcraft, hand-built ceramics, pottery wheel, and textile dyeing, as described in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Description of Workshop Target Items and Essential Tasks

Craft Medium	Target Item	Essential Tasks
Metalcraft	Brooch	Cutting with a band saw Using a file Pounding with a hammer
Hand-built ceramics	Traditional tea bowl (<i>Chawan</i>)	Forming a mold Cutting clay Using an electrical dryer
Pottery wheel	Bowl	Manipulating clay by hand Using a pottery wheel Cutting clay
Textile dyeing	Handkerchief	Folding cloth Clamping with woodblocks Dyeing and rinsing Using electrical dryer

Senders were not offered any pre-workshop advice, rehearsal, or specific language instruction. Participants did not meet each other until the actual workshop, and senders and receivers agreed to make efforts to use only English to communicate. Data was collected by video.

Strategies Employed by Senders

From the transcribed data of student workshops, a variety of strategies were identified, including: gesture, code switching, appealing for assistance, paraphrasing, feigning comprehension, and the use of stock phrases. Table 2 shows the number of occurrences of strategies for each workshop.

Table 2

Occurrence of Strategies

	Gesture	Code Switch	Appeal for Assistance	Paraphrase/ Analogy	Feigning Comprehension	Stock Phrase
Workshop 1	5	8	10	3	0	0
Workshop 2	3	3	3	0	3	0
Workshop 3	8	3	0	0	1	1
Workshop 4	10	9	3	2	0	0
Total	26	23	15	5	4	1

Concerning criteria for classification, gesture was designated only when used as the exclusive device, and was not counted when accompanied by verbal output. Code switching was inclusive of both Japanese utterances and those that combined Japanese and English. Feigning comprehension was determined when senders incorrectly replied with a 'yes' answer to a wh-question or when they concurred with inaccurate statements made by receivers.

An analysis of the strategic devices for each workshop are presented in the following sections. Participants are referred to by abbreviation of S and R and the corresponding workshop number, for example R2 indicates the receiver in the second workshop.

Workshop 1

All strategic devices employed by S1 can be considered achievement strategies. Appeal for assistance with lexical items were most frequently used, although only two out of ten instances were direct appeals for an unknown word. The remaining eight were indirect appeals for confirmation of proper word usage, signaled by rising intonation, for example: *Please cutting like, how do you say, flatly?* S1 also often used code switching, usually in self-talk as a filler while recalling lexical items, such as *And, nan to iu, kore o ugokasu...moving (And, 何と言う, これを動かす...moving?)*.

Additionally, gesture was strategically used on five occasions, three of which compensated for lack of knowledge of words to describe the degree of tilting of tools and materials, such as ‘perpendicular’ or ‘diagonal’. Furthermore, paraphrasing was used on three occasions, for example in the utterance *And we can see our face like a mirror*, to convey the meaning of ‘shine’.

Workshop 2

In contrast to the first workshop, S2 used both avoidance and achievement strategies. No particular strategy dominated, but in three cases, avoidance occurred with S2’s feigning comprehension of the receiver’s utterances, made by either answering a *wh-* question with a reply of ‘yes’ (R2: *Ok and so how should I use my hands?* S2: *Yes, yes.*), or by agreeing with R2’s inaccurate description of the ceramic process of *rakuyaki* technique of firing ceramics (R: *You mean it’s painted with lacquer?* S: *Yeah.*). In terms of achievement strategies, S2 used gesture to communicate descriptions of clay conditions, such as bowl-shaped, round, or shrinking. Additionally, appeals for assistance by S2 were made by facial expression, rising intonation, and a direct appeal to another student who happened to be working in the studio at the same time.

Workshop 3

The sender in Workshop 3 relied heavily on gesture, which was most often used to compensate for her lack of knowledge of verbs such as ‘pull’, ‘let go’, and ‘fall off’. S3 used a set phrase (*One more please.*) to direct R3 to step on the pottery wheel pedal again. Avoidance strategies occurred on two occasions. In one instance, instead of responding to R3’s question (*Should it be round?*) that was made with direct eye contact and rising intonation, S3 avoids answering and returns to working with the clay. The second case occurs in an interesting exchange that begins with S1’s self-talk code switching:

S3: *Atsui wa nan dakke?* [厚いは何だっけ?]

R3: Something’s that’s hot?

S3: Umm umm [nods head]

R3: And so if it’s for something that’s hot then you want it thicker?

S3: Yeah yeah yeah.

S3 appeared to ask herself *Atsui wa nan dakke?* (How do you say *atsui*?) in order to recall the word ‘thick’. Inadvertently, R3 offered assistance, but mistakenly gave the meaning for a homophone of *atsui* (熱い) meaning ‘hot’. This follows with S3 agreeing even though it is likely that she knew ‘hot’, a commonly known word among Japanese learners, was not the term she was trying to recall.

S3’s gestures often occurred when instructing R3 how to use her hands to manipulate the spinning clay on the pottery wheel. Once R3 took over on the wheel, a large number of S3 utterances were short informing moves, such as *yeah, yeah* or *ok, ok* that respond to R3’s questions. This may explain why S3 was the only sender who made no direct appeals for assistance with vocabulary.

Workshop 4

In Workshop 4, all devices were classified as achievement strategies. S4 relied on code switching most often, both as self-talk and as a substitute for lexical items.

Appeals for assistance were all direct and started with *How do you say...* Additionally, two cases of paraphrasing were present. One successful attempt communicated the concept of the blue color of the dye eventually rinsing clean by saying “*When this blue is like ah...water*”. A lengthy and unsuccessful second attempt, to cope with not knowing the word ‘vinegar’, began by describing the process of making sushi: *Rice is little sweet... ah normal rice is sweet... because this little [gestures pouring]... Nandaro (何だろ う)...put on?*

S4 frequently used code switching, but unlike the other senders, she produced utterances that mixed Japanese and English as an appeal to R4’s knowledge of Japanese, for example “This and this..*mazaru (混ぜる)*”, when giving instructions to mix two liquids. This strategy was not particularly effective since the items in question were outside of R4’s lexicon.

Discussion of Findings

By focusing on the senders’ strategic competence, the study drew awareness of three salient patterns that are relevant to the development of learning materials to help craft practitioners improve their ability to give instructions in English. First, all senders employed code switching in self-talk to some degree. There may be some value to this device in that it serves as a filler of time to recall lexical items, but it seems to create a risk of receiver’s misinterpreting utterances in L1 as part of the L2 discourse structure. In other words, it is not always clear when senders are talking to themselves or to receivers. This issue may be approached by learning materials that foster the use of similar filler devices in English, such as *Ah, you know ...Hold on, what is that word ...Ok, let me try that again*. Such phrases signal that senders are struggling with cognitive processes, but are still engaged in communication.

Secondly, the study suggests that communication breakdown during the workshops is most often caused by a lack of lexical knowledge by the senders. Along

with relevant vocabulary of each craft medium, effective learning materials should also include activities that foster the development of paraphrasing or analogy as a strategy, something that was not used very often by senders in this study. Semantically dense and hard to remember technical phrases could be reduced to simplified analogy. For example, language such as *make a sandwich* or *like a teabag* could easily describe folding and fabric immersion technique in textile dyeing. Additionally, introducing general all-purpose nouns, such as *stuff*, *thing*, *item*, *object*, and *material*, could bridge the gap in senders' lexicon. Such superordinate nouns, especially when used with demonstrative adjectives (i.e., *that item*, *this stuff*, *those things*) may greatly improve senders' ability to cope with a lack of lexical knowledge.

A third pattern concerns senders' appeals for direct assistance, which were not particularly effective due to the receivers' limited knowledge of the Japanese language. Senders made almost no attempts to reference dictionaries or notes prepared beforehand, nor did they attempt to utilize visual modes of communicating such as drawing or showing photographs. Senders may benefit from learning materials that highlight the effectiveness of multi-modal communicative devices, such as preparing a handout to accompany the workshop, or placing English labels on objects and materials. Since tourists who participate in hands-on workshops are generally not familiar with the technical jargon of a specific medium, utilizing visual elements to simplify technical terms may help both senders and receivers. For example, specific terms for metalcraft tools, such as a *scriber* or *drift pin* could simply be referred to as "the blue tool" or "the red one" if marked by colored tape or paint. Since the goal of workshops in contexts of creative tourism is to allow receivers to experience basic technical instruction, specific terms may not always be required.

In summary, the four case studies presented here helped to identify several factors that can serve as a point of departure for developing learning materials. These include focus on time filler phrases, analogy, superordinate nouns, and alternative methods of appealing for assistance. Although strategic competence should not be viewed as an

end in itself, it may compliment other components of communicative competence and help Japanese craft professionals improve their ability to engage in L2 hands-on procedural discourse.

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陶芸、金属工芸、染色の体験型クリエイティブ・ ツーリズム・ワークショップにおける 第二言語方略的能力の調査

マーク・ハモンド

要旨

本稿は、日本人工芸家が英語で技術指導をする際に用いる第二言語（L2）の方略的能力に焦点をあて、四つの事例を検討する。この調査は、英語を話す訪日外国人を対象としたクリエイティブ・ツーリズム・ワークショップ運営に役立つ教材開発プロジェクトの一環として実施したものである。論文では、まず方略的能力について説明し、プロジェクトの概要を述べたのち、体験型ワークショップで実際に用いられた L2 コミュニケーション方略を紹介・分析する。最後に調査結果を検討するが、その際とくに着目するのは、フィラー、アナロジーや上位語、いろいろな補助手段の活用である。