

JACTAT Bruno

Interactive Listening Strategy Instruction for Japanese Beginner Level Learners of a Foreign Language

ABSTRACT

This pedagogical essay on foreign language classroom pragmatics argues for jumpstarting the exploration of a foreign language by embedding Oral Communication Strategies (OCS) into the curriculum from the very first class. The focus here is on explicit instruction of Interactive Listening Strategies (ILS) to boost Communicative Competence (CC). Japanese learners often resort to avoidance behaviors in Foreign Language (FL) interaction if they are not otherwise instructed to consciously and appropriately respond with adequate strategies. After defining what ILS are, a set of task-based activities which stage these specific strategies will be described for FL classroom use.

KEYWORDS

communication strategies, interactive listening, foreign language, task-based language learning

1 Context

A disenchantment with the grammar-lexis focus on language instruction led to a search in the 1970s for a more effective oral approach to language learning and the development of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory and methodology. However it has not gained wide-spread approval in Japan's Foreign Language (FL) teaching landscape. Sociocultural, political, institutional and interpersonal reasons (Kavanagh, 2012; Smith, 2012) account for the failure of providing adequate instruction to effectively foster Communicative Competence (CC) in Japan. FL teachers keep using the same methods that have consistently produced poor results despite numerous studies questioning the effectiveness of the current linguistically-based schooling provided in Japan (Gan, 2012, p.43). As Sun (2014) puts it, there is an "overdue bias on linguistic competence rather than strategic competence" (p.1064) and an "overdue bias on discrete skills rather than interactional skills" (p. 1065).

This pedagogical essay propounds that inserting strategic competence into the curriculum from the outset of foreign language teaching would help overcome the aforementioned problem. Jactat (2017) professes that one of the exemplary pedagogical stratagems to enhance CC resides in the explicit instruction and training of Oral Communication Strategies (OCS) through interactional pair-based activities.

The bulk of studies on Communication Strategies (CS) is mainly veered

toward production strategies (e.g. Bialystok, 1990; Dörnyei, 1995; Faerch & Kasper, 1983; Kozawa, 2017; Nakatani, 2005, 2010; Nakatani & Goh, 2007; Naughton, 2006; Paribakht, 1985; Saito, 2016; Talandis & Stout, 2015; Tarone, 1981; Willems, 1987). This essay, however, looks at the flip side of production, namely reception strategies. And more precisely it focuses on the usefulness of instructing Interactive Listening Strategies (ILS), an under-examined component of interaction.

The idea of using ILS to boost CC will be discussed in the first part (chapters 2-5). The last chapter will present an array of pedagogical exercises for Oral Communication Strategy (OCS) training, and more precisely for developing ILS skills.

The scope of this article does not allow to cover all possible ILS that can be taught to improve communicative competence. The primary intention is to discuss its value in changing FL learning practices and behaviors, foremost among Japanese learners who have a tendency to avoid responding and remain silent when faced with a communication problem. ILS are thought to be useful in curtailing these behaviors in formal conversational settings.

2 Communicative strategies versus avoidance behaviors

Communication strategies have been broadly categorized into two general groups: achievement strategies and avoidance strategies (Bialystok, 1990; Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Faerch & Kasper, 1983; Nakatani, 2005, 2006; Tarone, 1981). Achievement strategies are used by learners when they need and want to find alternate ways to express their communication objective. On the other hand, avoidance strategies are ways to escape a communication breakdown by opting out of any backup plan to remedy the situation. The former are regarded as “good learner” behaviors and the latter as “anti-learning” behaviors (Purpura, 2014).

The most common avoidance strategy observed in Japanese learners of a foreign language is lack of uptake i.e. silence (Brachet, 2000). Some other noted behaviors are inappropriate code switching, feigning understanding, message abandonment, under elaboration, linguistic avoidance, (Jactat, 2001, 2017). Other reactions include laughing inappropriately, overriding (ignoring the sender’s utterances and carrying on with the topic) and minimal feedback (e.g. uh-huh) (Tokeshi, 2003, p.56).

In some oriental societies, “the responsibility to the group and fear of losing face converge to create an atmosphere that promotes silence over talk, a preference for mindful quiet over mindless conversation.” (Weatherall, 2007, p. 63-64). Although one might argue that these socio-culturally ingrained behaviors are natural and serve a purpose in those societies, long silent pauses infringe upon a constructive learning experience in a foreign language classroom setting. Harumi (2010) also points out that resorting to silence as a response in the FL classroom generally stems from facing linguistic problems but also from lack of confidence, difficulty with time management and problems with turn

taking. These students are obviously not enacting achievement strategies to overcome these difficulties but instead avoiding them through silence, a socio-cultural imprint on their classroom behavior. We had already made the point that *avoidance strategies* referred to in CS literature should be renamed *avoidance behaviors* (Jactat, 2017, p.3). In formal classroom settings, avoidance is not considered a strategy by some researchers as these so called “strategies circumvent target language use and, therefore, do not demonstrate strategic competence” (Houston, 2006, p.65). Since such conduct is detrimental to learning and does not meet the agenda of OCS as “language devices relied on during oral interaction for sustaining conversation and handling communication breakdowns” (Jactat, 2017, p.3), it is advisable to give students tools to embrace the numerous challenges they face when using a language, and especially from the beginner level.

Studies have shown that explicitly teaching CS has a positive side-effect in that it diminishes the use of avoidance behaviors (e.g. Inuzuka, 2001; Rohani, 2013; Watanabe, 2004). Classroom teaching practices help students reduce avoidance behaviors by resorting to more achievement strategies through augmented interaction that therefore improves their overall communicative competence (Kozawa, 2017; Nakatani, 2005, 2010; Nakatani & Goh, 2007; Naughton, 2006; Saito, 2016; Talandis & Stout, 2015).

3 Defining Interactive Listening

Receptive strategies in this context point to verbal and non-verbal acts taken during communicative interaction between speaker and listener, not to situations in which the listener experiences one-way input such as in media input (TV, music, etc.), conference and eavesdropping for example.

There are indeed a variety of listening practices. Rost’s most recent classification of types of listening practice for the foreign language classroom divides them into the five following groups:

- “Intensive listening: listening to a text closely, with the intention to decode the input for purposes of analysis.”
 - “Selective listening: listening with a planned purpose in mind, often to gather specific information to perform a task.”
 - “Extensive listening: listening for several minutes at a time, staying in the target language, usually with a long-term goal of appreciating and learning the content.”
 - “Autonomous listening: independent listening, without the direct guidance of an instructor.”
 - “Interactive listening: type of conversational interaction in which the listener takes a leading role in understanding, through providing feedback, asking questions and supporting the speaker.”
- (Rost, 2013, p. 184-200. For a detailed description of each category see Rost, 2016, p. 169-190).

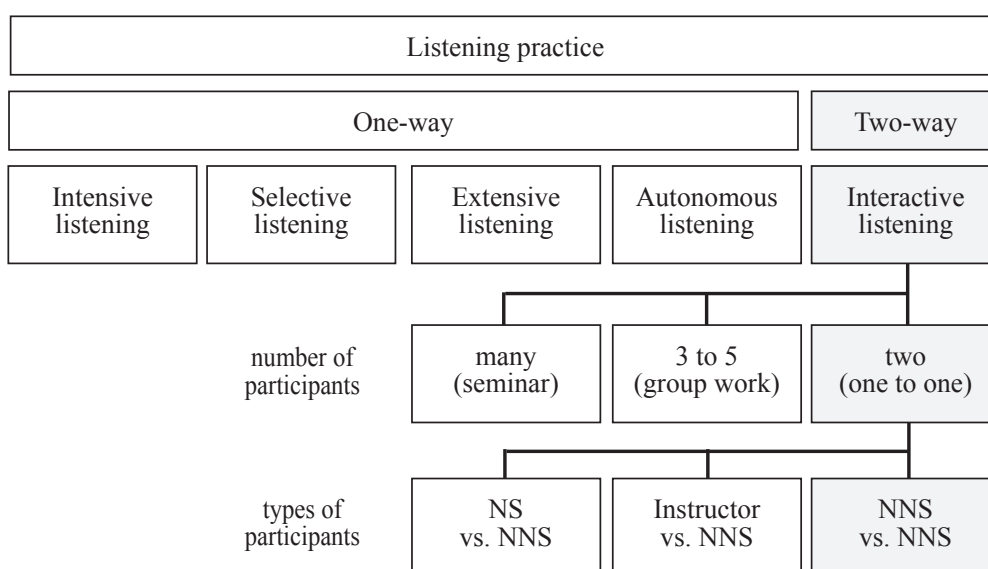
These 5 types of listening practice can be distinguished into two broad groups:

- One-way listening: typically associated with the reception of information.

- Two-way listening: typically associated with conversation.

One-way listening comprises the first four types in which the listener is alone faced with incoming audio information (intensive, selective, extensive and autonomous listening). Most classroom listening instruction uses this type of non-participatory activities. But many L2 learners actually hope to develop their listening competence through *interactions*, to be able one day to communicate and exchange in social conversations with the native speaker. The fifth listening practice aims just at that: interactive listening is a two-way process by which the listener alternates as speaker and listener in a conversation (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Listening practice



*This article focuses on the far right column.

In order to define interactive listening in this context, Xiaoxian & Yan's (2010) report on the 20 or so existing quasi-definitions of interactive listening and examined their most salient features which are mainly: listener behavior, active role of listener, communicative purpose, and collaborative nature. Listener responses to an interlocutor were found to be the single most striking feature of interactive listening as these responses spotlighted the listener's negotiation of aural input.

Xiaoxian & Yan (2010) rendered a rather long construct for interactive listening. It nevertheless has the advantage of defining in detail what it actually entails to listen interactively:

Interactive listening takes place in a communicative situation, in which the listener, taking an active role (as a participant or an addressee), listens and gives responses such as signaling comprehension, requesting clarifications, negotiating meanings, etc. In so doing, the listener, in collaboration with the speaker, solves communication problems, shapes the discourse, and accomplishes certain goals of interaction (p. 22).

Interactive listening can furthermore be characterized by the number and type of participants engaged in the interaction. There can be a very large group, as in an entire class being responsive to a lecturer (e.g. the teacher), a small group of 3 to 5 students (as in group work in a class), or it can be on a one-to-one basis (as in pair work activities).

This paper is foremost interested in looking at the latter situation, in a bilateral non-native speaker (NNS-NNS) context for totally beginner level students. Before the student can actively engage with a native speaker (NS) in a natural setting, the formal classroom environment allows for training in a safe NNS vs NNS situation. Interactive listening in this particular context “refers to a type of conversational interaction in which the listener takes a leading role in understanding, through providing feedback, asking questions and supporting the speaker” (Rost, 2013, p. 190).

Taking on such a role implies that the listener needs a set of strategic tools that will lead him to successfully achieve those communicative goals (i.e. *providing feedback, asking questions and supporting the speaker*). By naturally switching roles as speaker and listener, L2 learners can ask their interlocutor for clarification or confirmation, ask them to repeat or slow down, hence experiencing the use of reception strategies firsthand. This is of great benefit to the learner who through the use of listening strategies will become a better listener who can intervene more appropriately.

4 Defining Interactive Listening Strategies

As previously mentioned, several authors have attempted to define interactive listening, but as yet there is still to be found a clear definition for ILS. Drawing on the aforementioned authors’ definitions of interactive listening (Rost, 2013; Xiaoxian & Yan, 2010) and OCS (Jactat, 2017), we can identify interactive listening strategies as:

“responses the listener resorts to during oral interaction to handle comprehension breakdowns and sustain conversation.”

In the literature there seems to be a consensus among investigators of ILS that these strategies have either a backward orientation or forward orientation (Vandergrift, 2012, p.31). Backward oriented strategies aim at signaling non-understanding of previously given information thus serve to *handle comprehension breakdowns* (see strategies 1-3 in Table 1, p.7). As for forward oriented strategies, they help move the conversation forward through acknowledgment of comprehension and consequently *sustain conversation*

(strategies 4-6 in Table 1).

The inventory of Interactive Listening Strategies by Vandergrift (2012 p. 30) is a well-established model based on previous research with L2 listeners engaged in interactive tasks (Dörnyei & Kormos, 1998; Farrell & Mallard, 2006; Rost & Ross, 1991; Vandergrift, 1997, 2006). Table 1 reproduces those results and juxtaposes a number of examples considered suitable to teach for beginner level foreign language learners (for a caption definition of each strategy type, refer to Vandergrift, 2012, p. 30).

Interactive implies a collaborative communication set up in the FL classroom. Therefore, it is not enough to give the listener a set of response strategies but it is equally important to provide the interlocutor with some possible reactions to those strategies, in order to respond in turn appropriately to the listener's feedback. This is especially true for beginner level students who might be at a loss as to how to follow up the conversation. This guarantees a virtuous loop in the conversation where both interlocutors can bounce off one another even with little linguistic knowledge or experience and ensure that the two-way communication does not break down.

Table 1 offers a sample of formulaic language containing pragmatic devices that the listener and interlocutor can use exchangeably to sustain the conversation flow. The next section will showcase pragmatic activities as to how strategy instruction can be embedded into task-based activities for the FL class.

5 Interactive Listening Strategies

Verbal strategies presented in Table 1 are composed of utterances (*Oh yeah!*) and formulaic chunks (*Can you repeat that?*) which, combined to possible responses from the interlocutor, make up for what Kozawa (2017) calls "prefabricated patterns of communication strategies" (PPCS). These devices are believed to enhance student awareness of available strategies, enhance their communicative skills and thus bend their learning curve upwards. Teachers can explicitly instruct students on how to use these language devices to respond consciously and appropriately to their interlocutor through a series of two-way collaborative tasks which effectively stage these interactive listening skills. These communicative activities support listener control of conversations, such as "regulating turn-taking and seeking feedback through clarification and confirmation checks" (Lynch, 1996).

Listings of task-based activities for class oriented oral communication strategies (OCS) have been developed and documented by various researchers (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994; Faucette, 2001; Ichikawa, 2013; Maleki, 2010; Ogane, 1998). The emphasis given by these authors is exclusively on production skills of OCS and not on the reception side of OCS. Referencing specific types of tasks suited to elicit the use of ILS is the aim of this paper. This stance does not seem to have been covered by any article as far as I know and most probably not for beginner level students. By the same token, most articles and books seem to offer strategic activities geared toward intermediate or advanced levels despite the fact that some authors profess that starting at an early level is an important step to master these strategies more effectively in the long run. In line with this

Table 1. Interactive Listening Strategies – Vandergrift model

| Strategy | OCS | Listener | Interlocutor |
|---|--|--|---|
| 1. Global reprise / ask for repetition / convey non-understanding | Request provide repetition | <i>One more time please. Can you repeat (more slowly)? What was the question? Sorry, I didn't catch the last part</i> | Repeats and emphasizes |
| | Expressing non-understanding | <i>Verbal: Pardon? I don't understand. NF: raised / furrowed eyebrows, confused / blank look</i> | Repeats more slowly <i>Did you understand what I said?</i> |
| | Expressing unknowingness | <i>I don't know. I forgot. I don't remember. Could you spell it, please? How do you say...in French?</i> | <i>Me neither. I think it's... It's spelled ABC... I think it's...</i> |
| | 2. Ask for clarification / specific lexical reprise | Request provide clarification <i>WH? (Where? / When? etc.) ...lunch? He is going...? Can you give me an example? You mean...?</i> | <i>I said... answers the WH question lunch means... He is going to have lunch. Sure, for example... Yes, that's it. Exactly! No, what I meant is...</i> |
| 3. Hypothesis testing / ask for confirmation | Interpretive summary | | |
| | Maintenance / Reactors | <i>Oh, I see. Ok, that's great! Wow! Wow, great! Oh yeah? Oh really? Oh, that's too bad. That sounds like fun!</i> | continues talking |
| | Maintenance / Feedback | <i>Mm-hm... Uh-huh... Yeah... I see... Cool. Right.</i> | continues talking |
| | Laughing at the appropriate time. | Nods, raising eyebrows | |
| 5. Forward inference / interpretive summary | Maintenance / Shadowing | <i>A Do you go shopping on week-ends? B Do I go shopping on week-ends?... Paris? For vacation?</i> | No response necessary, gives time to listener to think out his answer. <i>Yes, that's right. No that's not it.</i> |
| | Maintenance / Follow-ups (to an answer, develop with WH questions) | <i>B Yes I like music. A What kind of music? B rock and heavy metal. A (your favorite?) (How often...?)(when?)(where?), etc.</i> | responds to follow-up questions |
| | (Avoidance behavior) | Yes (smile), I see... | continues talking |
| | feigning understanding | | |
| 4. Uptaking / backchanneling | Maintenance / Reactors | <i>Oh, I see. Ok, that's great! Wow! Wow, great! Oh yeah? Oh really? Oh, that's too bad. That sounds like fun!</i> | continues talking |
| | Maintenance / Feedback | <i>Mm-hm... Uh-huh... Yeah... I see... Cool. Right.</i> | continues talking |
| | Laughing at the appropriate time. | Nods, raising eyebrows | |
| | 5. Forward inference / interpretive summary | Maintenance / Shadowing | <i>A Do you go shopping on week-ends? B Do I go shopping on week-ends?... Paris? For vacation?</i> |
| 6. Faking feigning understanding | Maintenance / Follow-ups (to an answer, develop with WH questions) | <i>B Yes I like music. A What kind of music? B rock and heavy metal. A (your favorite?) (How often...?)(when?)(where?), etc.</i> | responds to follow-up questions |
| | (Avoidance behavior) | Yes (smile), I see... | continues talking |
| | feigning understanding | | |
| | | | |

Adapted from Vandergrift & Goh, 2012

Note: all examples of strategies presented here are appropriate for beginner level learners except Interpretive summary (from intermediate)

thought, Kozawa (2017) confirms that it “would be practical for language learners to learn strategic prefabricated patterns for communication. In particular, novice learners, who experience difficulty in constructing sentences, can appreciate prefabricated meaningful expressions they can say as a whole unit” (p.10).

The tasks listed in the next pages can be implemented at the first stages of learning any foreign language, be it English (elementary school in Japan), or when taking on a second foreign language whether it be at school or college.

As we have seen, communicative strategies are known to help keep the communication channel open. And as one of the ingredients of CS, the use of ILS equally aims for that outcome. When appropriately handled, they ensure that the listener gives feedback to the interlocutor who can in turn provide clarification or help in different ways. This instills a virtuous circle of learning “that makes learners responsible for the outcome of their interactions with other learners [and goes] a long way towards promoting meaningful communication in the classroom, thereby increasing the opportunities for strategy use” (Houston, 2006, p.81).

6 ILS instruction through task-based activities

Tasks indexed hereafter are mostly pair-based activities to entice maximum exchange time between learners. Tarone purported that “*exercises designed to give the student practice in using communication strategies to solve communication problems should require that the speaker alone have information that the listener or listeners require in order to complete some task*” (Tarone, 1984, p.7). The subsequent conversational tasks do just that. Thus some of the best tasks for fostering the use of ILS will be information gap tasks.

Classroom activities geared toward helping students enact ILS are hereafter distinguished into two broad types : activities that *explicitly* focus on the use of a particular ILS, and activities that create a situation that *implicitly* requires students to resort to ILS. Empiric classroom practice shows that explicit ILS tasks should directly precede implicit ILS tasks for maximized learning outcome. The guiding principle in the use of the following activities is that of “learn a little, use a lot”. To secure long term memory of prefabricated patterns of communication strategies (PPCSs), students need practice in a variety of ways, henceforth the diversity of activities.

Following is a listing of ILS task-based activities the teacher can implement in their FL classroom. Most of these activities are adapted from the FL teaching literature while some are originally created tasks by the author. The reference to the original source is provided when available.

6.1 Strategy : Global reprise

6.1.1 Muffled mouth

ILS use: ask to repeat (Ichikawa, 2003, p.5)

Can you repeat that? One more time please. I don't understand.

Pardon? What did you say?

Table 2. Interactive listening strategy task-based activities

| Strategy | Explicit activity | Implicit activity |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Global reprise | 6.1.1 Muffled mouth * | 6.1.6 Pass the Pointer |
| | 6.1.2 Rush riddle * | 6.1.7 How do you say? * |
| | 6.1.3 Last left out * | 6.1.8 TPR |
| | 6.1.4 Alphabet beads * | |
| | 6.1.5 Picture Prompt * | |
| Ask for clarification | 6.2.1 Dual dictation * | |
| | 6.2.2 Lexical reprise | |
| | 6.2.3 WH reprise * | |
| Uptaking / backchanneling | 6.3 Cool cues | |
| Forward inference / interpretive summary | 6.4 Mirror talk | |
| All strategies (implicit only) | | |
| 6.5.1 Circle the word/ image | 6.5.5 Pairs Interviews | 6.5.9 Cross word link |
| 6.5.2 Response election | 6.5.6 Find somebody who | 6.5.10 Cross sentence link |
| 6.5.3 True or False? | 6.5.7 Find identical info | 6.5.11 Odd one out |
| 6.5.4 Who am I? | 6.5.8 Find differences | ... |

*GAP = information gap activities.

GAP: student A and student B have complete and incomplete sentences. Student A turns their face away and muffles a complete sentence. If student B cannot fill in the missing words on their sheet, they ask student A to repeat. Student A then repeats without muffling.

6.1.2 Rush riddle

ILS use: ask to slow down (Ichikawa, 2003, p.5)

Can you repeat that more slowly, please?

GAP: student A silently reads the first sentence two times in their head. Then student A turns to student B and reads the sentence out loud as quickly as possible. If student B cannot fill in the missing words on their sheet, they ask student A to repeat and slow down.

6.1.3 Last left out

ILS use: ask to repeat last word (Ichikawa, 2003, p.5)

Sorry, I didn't catch the last part/word.

GAP: student A reads the first sentence clearly but muffles the very last word. If student B cannot fill in the missing word on their sheet, they ask student A to repeat more clearly. Other prompts are:

*Sorry, can you repeat this last word again?
 Sorry, I couldn't hear the word after 'la'.
 Sorry, what does 'voiture' mean?*

6.1.4 Alphabet beads

ILS use: expressing non-understanding
Sorry, I didn't catch that!

GAP: students A and B reconstruct the name of a celebrity by saying the letters one letter at a time in turn. When they don't get it they ask for repetition. Once they are done, they check orally that they got the same info using the model. This can be done with names of places, brands, things, etc.

Student A

S_p_i_M_r_e_u

Answer : **Sophie Marceau**

Student B

_o_h_e_a_c_a_

Model conversation:

B. I think it's Sophie Marceau!

A. Yes, that's right. Who is she?

B. I think she's a French actress. Do you know which photograph is hers?

A. I think it's this one (and points)

B. Yes I think that's right.

6.1.5 Picture Prompt

ILS use: expressing unknowingness

GAP: A and B sheets have a printed page full of pictures, some of them with captions and some without, some of them they know already (80%) and some are new (20%). Student A shows student B an image on his sheet and asks B "Do you know/remember how to say this in French?"

Options for reaction are:

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| I think it's... | it's ..., thanks. How do you spell it? Sorry, what did you say that was? |
| No, I don't know. | Me neither, I don't know. |
| I forgot. I don't remember. | I think it's... |

6.1.6 Pass the Pointer

ILS use: expressing unknowingness (Yee, undated, *Interactive Techniques*)

What is this in French? Which one of these is a ...?

This is a variant of Picture prompt. There is only one large sheet for each pair of students who will work together. This A3 size poster is full of complex, intricate,

or detailed images but without any captions. Students already know some of these words (80%) and some are new (20%). They use a pencil as a pointer, point to one of the images and use one of the two prompts above.

6.1.7 How do you say?

ILS use: expressing unknowingness

GAP: student A asks student B how to say such and such word they don't have on their sheet in the target language.

Model interaction:

- A. *Comment dit-on dog en français? (How do you say dog in French?)*
- B. *On dit chien. (It's chien)*
- A. *Chien, merci. Ça s'écrit comment ?*
(Chien, thanks. How do you spell it?)
- B. *C.H.I.E.N.*
- A. *Merci. (thanks)*
- B. *De rien. (you're welcome)*

6.1.8 Total Physical Response (TPR)

ILS use: expressing non-understanding
Do you understand what I just said?

Student A reads a list of sentences. Student B either stands or sits to indicate their answers, such as Yes/No, to student A's questions. Other options are to use other non-verbal cues to respond such as frowned eye-brows, smile, eyes wide-open, shoulder shrug, etc. This activity focuses both on the listener's use of non-verbal listening strategies, but most importantly on the interlocutor's perception of them and the speaker's reaction toward body signals of non-understanding.

| The speaker | The listener |
|--|--------------------|
| Reads a sentence from list and asks: <i>Do you understand what I just said?</i> | nonverbal reaction |
| <i>Ok, you got it!</i> | nonverbal reaction |
| <i>Ok, let me rephrase this.</i> | nonverbal reaction |

6.2 Strategy: Ask for clarification

6.2.1 Dual dictation

ILS use: ask for clarification
What did you say? How do you spell...? What does ...mean?

GAP: this is like Alphabet beads (see above), except that instead of just letters, students reconstruct full sentences. They read one word after another to each other and must ask questions for clarification without showing each other's papers.

Student A

Il _____ Tom _____.

Mayers.

Il _____ Britannique.

Student B

_____ s'appelle _____

_____ est _____.

Il s'appelle Tom Mayers. Il est Britannique. (His name is Tom Mayers. He is British)

6.2.2 Lexical reprise

ILS use: ask for clarification

What did you say? How do you spell...? What does ...mean?

Student A reads a sentence and student B automatically repeats either:

- the sentence without the last word and with rising intonation.
(Tom Mayers is going ...?)

- the last word of the sentence with rising intonation :
... shopping?

Student A repeats the whole sentence. Student B can ask for further clarification if necessary.

6.2.3 WH reprise

ILS use: ask for clarification

GAP: student A reads a sentence and student B automatically responds with a WH question for clarification on the basis of this model:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| A. <i>Tom va à l'école.</i> | <i>Tom goes to school</i> |
| B. <i>Où ça?</i> | <i>Where?</i> |
| A. <i>à l'école.</i> | <i>to school.</i> |
| B. <i>ah d'accord, à l'école</i> | <i>ok, to school</i> |
| A. <i>Il y va avec Sophie.</i> | <i>He's going there with Sophie.</i> |
| B. <i>Avec qui?</i> | <i>With who?</i> |
| A. <i>Avec Sophie...etc</i> | <i>with Sophie...</i> |

6.3 Strategy: Uptaking / backchanneling**Cool cues**

ILS use: uptaking

Cards with the following gambits written on them (one per card): *Oh, I see. Ok, that's great! Wow! Wow, great! Oh yeah? Oh really? Oh, that's too bad. That sounds like fun!*

Student A reads a short text and pauses at the end of each sentence. Student B must use one card appropriately and utter the expression on it. Student A verifies that the cue used is correct (the cues appear between brackets in the text they are reading). A then continues reading. Then swap roles with another text.

6.4 Strategy: Forward inference / interpretive summary

Mirror talk

ILS use: shadowing

Student A asks student B questions from a list and student B automatically repeats the questions but puts “I” instead of “you” when appropriate.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>A. Tu viens ici comment ?</i> | <i>How do you come here?</i> |
| <i>B. Je viens ici comment?</i> | <i>How do I come here?</i> |
| <i>En vélo.</i> | <i>By bicycle.</i> |
| <i>Et toi, tu viens ici comment?</i> | <i>and you, how do you come here ?</i> |
| <i>A. Moi?</i> | <i>Me?</i> |
| <i>Je viens ici à pied.</i> | <i>I walk here.</i> |

6.5 Strategy: implicit activities calling on all interactive listening strategies

6.5.1 Circle the word/ image

ILS use: all (Yee, undated, *Interactive Techniques*)

How do you say...in French? How do you spell it?

Distribute a handout that has a list of likely words or images students know and don't know yet. Ask students to circle the ones they don't know the answers to and ask their neighbor for help.

6.5.2 Response election

ILS use: all (Yee, undated, *Interactive Techniques*)

Distribute a list of gambits and have pairs decide together which listening responses are best in the list with it. Then have them play out the lines and responses.

6.5.3 True or False

ILS use: all (Yee, undated, *Interactive Techniques*)

Pre-make some cards on which is written a statement. Each student gets a card. Half of the cards contain true statements, the other half false ones. Participants decide if their partner's statement is true or not, using the listening stratagems they need.

6.5.4 Who am I?

ILS use: all (Yee, undated, *Interactive Techniques*)

Clip or tape a word on the back of each student so they can't see it. Students then wander around the room, asking yes/no questions to the other students and try

to guess the word hidden behind their own back.

6.5.5 Pair interviews

ILS use: all (Vannieuwenhuysse, 2017)

Each student has a chart to fill. They seek out an interlocutor to ask the same questions repeatedly. Interactive listening prompts are also listed so that the listener can check understanding. Example:

6.5.6 Find somebody who

ILS use: all

A popular worksheet in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) textbooks. Worksheets can be grammar-based (e.g. present perfect and food) or vocabulary-based (likes and dislikes foods). Each student goes about the classroom with their checklist and try to find a student who has certain characteristics. When they find “someone who has natto for breakfast” or “someone who doesn’t like chocolate” they write that person’s name on their checklist and move on to the next person and see if s/he will meet one of the other characteristics on the checklist. The goal is to find the name of at least one student for each characteristic on the list.

■ Survey form Formulaire

| | name nom | lives in lieu d’habitation | comes from lieu d’origine |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| example | Suzuki Taro | Fukuoka | Iwate |
| 1st person | | | |
| 2nd person | | | |
| 3rd person | | | |

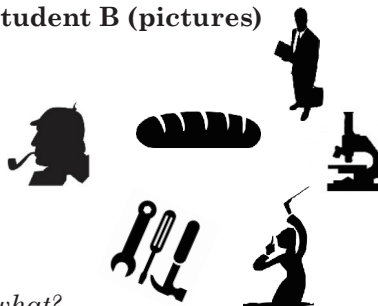
6.5.7 Find identical info

ILS use: all

This activity requires students to form questions about pictures, words or sentences they have on their worksheet. Worksheets A and B have some similar pictures and some different ones. If the topic is “jobs” for example, they might have these sheets:

Student A (words)

baker, lawyer, teacher, policeman,
engineer, scientist, mechanic, etc..

Student B (pictures)

Conversation model:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <i>A. Do you have the picture of a baker?</i> | <i>B. A what?</i> |
| <i>A. A baker.</i> | <i>B. What's a baker?</i> |
| <i>A. I think he makes bread.</i> | <i>B. Oh, ok, yes I have a picture of bread.</i> |
| <i>A. Ok let's circle baker and bread.</i> | <i>B. Ok, do you have "Sherlock Holmes"?</i> |
| <i>A. You mean a "detective"?</i> | <i>B. Yes a detective.</i> |
| <i>A. No I don't.</i> | <i>B. Ok I'll cross him out.</i> |

6.5.8 Find differences

ILS use: all

This classic FL classroom activity requires students to find differences in texts, or pictures. Lemeunier et al. (2010) have designed ingenious activities based on this setting. For example, students each have a different image of a fridge with various groceries inside the refrigerators. They must ask what the other does not have in their fridge and make a grocery list from it (p.114-115).

6.5.9 Cross word link

ILS use: all (Nation, 2008, p.25)

Each student has a sheet with different words and definitions. They have to talk and decide which definition goes with which word. There is always a word and a definition which don't match in the end. Students try to come up with their own definition to the last word, and own word to the remaining definition. At complete beginner levels it is easier to have students match statements as in the following example:

Student A

1. She likes sweets.
2. A dog
3. I live in Tokyo.
4. A bicycle.

Student B

1. An apartment.
2. I don't go to school on foot.
3. A book.
4. Mika likes pets.

6.5.10 Cross sentence link (Nation, 2008, p.25)

Each student has a sheet with different sentences and they must agree on which ones correspond to each other, which have close meanings. For example:

Student A

1. She likes sweets.
2. A dog
3. I live in Tokyo.
4. A bicycle.

Student B

1. An apartment.
2. I don't go to school on foot.
3. A book.
4. Mika likes pets.

6.5.11 Odd one out (Burton, 1987 in Nation, 2008, p.25)

Students receive a list of four items and must decide which one doesn't belong. For example, a set can be:

- a grammar based list: sang, sung, song, sing (the noun doesn't belong)
- a vocabulary based list: dog, cat, lion, horse (the wild animal doesn't belong)
- a content based list: English, Japanese, Thai, Korean (the non-Asian language doesn't belong)

Final thoughts

To sum up, this pedagogical essay suggests that implementing OCS and more particularly ILS into the curriculum at the outset of a FL teaching program can help learners improve their oral communicative competence, notably by curtailing observable avoidance behaviors, such as silence, which are characteristic of Japanese students.

Since many avoidance behaviors appear on the receptive side of an interaction (no follow-up on a statement, message abandonment, feigning understanding, etc.), we can assume that the instruction of ILS has the potential to help students rely more on conscious achievement strategies rather than unconsciously fall back on avoidance behaviors.

The display of materials here is succinct and should only serve as an inspirational source for teachers to develop their own material.

Furthermore, these activities are not to be thought of exclusively as listening tasks although they are presented as such. ILS involve the presence of an interlocutor in contrast to pure listening activities which are stand-alone tasks (listening to a radio program or a recorded story). Thus the two executants of these interactive tasks take turns playing out the listening strategies. This does not exclude the general use of productive skills.

This paper brings an underexposed area of SLA to light. The spotlight has usually been shone on productive skills in interaction. These ILS tasks should help raise some awareness about the importance of developing listening skills in an interaction, as a natural companion to speaking skills.

This approach nevertheless shows limitations as it remains mostly factual. Although current empiric classroom use of task-based ILS material supports the efficacy of such a method, thorough investigation remains to be carried out to evaluate to what extent such input is truly effective in improving learners' CC. In this respect, pre- and post-tests measuring improvement of ability with

a delayed post-test to evaluate long term improvement would shed light on the matter.

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