

Original Paper

Crucial Strategies to Solve Communicative Breakdown

Dilorom R. Ismoilova^{1*}

¹ English language department, Fergana State University, Fergana, Uzbekistan

Received: December 18, 2021 Accepted: January 7, 2022 Online Published: January 13, 2022

doi:10.22158/wjeh.v4n1p19

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjeh.v4n1p19>

Abstract

English has increasingly become international language for business and commerce, science and technology, international relations and diplomacy. Due to this fact, the purpose of learning a foreign language is communication. Through communication, people send and receive messages and negotiate meaning. Communication has different forms and takes place in different situations. People communicate to satisfy their needs. Heterogeneous interaction is carried out by a native speaker and a non-native one in the purpose of exchanging of ideas, information between two or more individuals. There is usually, at least one speaker or sender, a message which transmitted, and an individual or individuals for whom this message is intended. Communication breakdowns may happen to anybody communicating in a language other than their dominating language. This problem, surely, can be solved but how? The primary aim of this article is to investigate the heterogeneous communication process in the terms of possible breakdown which happens to all people while communicating, so that they are unable to get their messages across express what they mean and what they understand. The author highlights crucial strategies toward solving these disruptions.

Keywords

communication, communication breakdown, strategic competence, heterogeneous communication, unspecified repair, interrogative repair, partial repeat.

1. Introduction

It is worth pointing that, how EFL speakers use different types of repair strategies in different communication breakdowns in the non-homogeneous communication. A repair strategy is an organization of practices of talk in which speakers deal with problems as well as troubles in speaking, hearing or understanding talk. We would like to provide examples relevant to the matter is being discussed, when EFL speakers come up against communication disruption or trouble, they can be used to specify the trouble and assist to repair promisingly.

2. Method

As a foreign language teacher, we should not wait our learners to gain advanced level to teach communication strategies. We should begin at the early stages of teaching to cultivate the it in depth. Role plays and all kind of communicative activities assists to fulfill the task as well as to make it practical.

2.1 Unspecified Repair

Native speaker: Well Monday, let me think.

Non-native speaker: Huh?

Native speaker: Give me time to think.

Non-native speaker: Ah, yes, yes.

Among the other strategies applied by EFL speakers, unspecified repair is considered as a common type. In the unspecified example there is a repair initiator “huh”.

NN-S: My wife had been resting in Jamaica for three weeks.

N-S: Jamaica?

NN-S: What? No she wanted to go willingly. In this example, another repair initiator “what” is used and there is a misunderstanding on the identical utterances of words and word expressions. Here is a word “Jamaica” and the expression “*Did you make her*” are pronounced in the same way and brings about the miscommunication for a while.

Native speaker: Did you ever slip into the shock like winning the Big One?

ESL speaker: Pardon?

Native speaker: Have you ever won the lottery?

ESL speaker: I hate to buy it.

Native speaker: So you never win, my dear!

The conversation held by two communicators of different speech community is repaired by the means of “pardon”. In this interaction EFL speaker has a problem caused by lack of verbal intelligibility and authentic expressions. That is because, here is used the phrasal verb “slip into” and “the Big One”. It is natural that, not all of the EFL speakers are aware of the meanings of “Big One”. “The Big One” has two different meanings:

- 1) Winnings that have accumulated over two weeks or more.
- 2) It is the name for the great natural disaster dubbed by English people.

Here, in the conversation, breakdown occurred. Because EFL speaker does not have enough foreign language aptitude. Consequently, in order to bridge the gap between the native speakers he/she might have used a range of communication strategies and he preferred to utilize the unspecified repair and gained the success.

2.2 Interrogative Repair

Native speaker: Look, this is my spouse!

Non-native speaker: Who?

Native speaker: My wife.

Non-native speaker: Really, nice to see.

In this extract, there is a single question word “who” as repair devices. ESL speakers may use any question words according to what is trouble for them, I mean, difficulty in hearing or understanding. Here, the non-native speaker did not the equivalent of the word “wife”, which is widely used by native speakers in their daily life.

N-S: My hometown is the Aloha State.

NN-S: Where?

NS: We call Hawaii’ in this way.

NN-S: Honestly, it is news for me.

NS: Never mind. By the way, its basic meaning is “love, kind”.

NN-S: Yeap, the people in Hawaii’ always help one another.

You can observe this transparent breakdown happened in the communication process by the drawback of a non-native speaker. It is very important to gain the knowledge of geography, history, culture and social life of the English speaking countries. We know that, The Aloha State is the second name for Hawaii’ I and naturally, most of the ESL speakers are not aware of it. That is because this is a Hawaiian word and attractive and appealing to visitors.

N-S: We’ll meet in 3 days, right?

NN-S: When?

N-S: After 3 days.

NN-S: Word the word?

N-S: Sure.

In the interaction, the non-native speaker does not know the different usage of prepositions. So, here is the problem on grammar sensitivity. That is because, the preposition “in” denotes the place or location of something, but also is used to express the future time. The ESL speaker used this type of strategy and repaired the conversation using the question word “when”.

N-S: Let’s see and we are gonna read a book. Have you read it before?

NN-S: Can you introduce with the blurb?

N-S: Easy. The main character is Silvia. She is from Spain.

N-S: Who?

NN-S: Silvia, don’t you know? It is a Spanish name. Like you “Barno”.

As we see obviously, there is a breakdown. But how it happened? It seems that, the non-native speaker did not understand cultural context of the word. The lack of socio-cultural knowledge was observed to contribute to the ESL speakers’ difficulty in understanding. Here, the question word used as a repair tool and the native speaker mended the communication breakdown. Now I am decisive to summarize that, any ESL speaker is stable and has strong socio-cultural awareness, such breakdowns never occur with them.

2.3 *Partial Repeat plus a Question Word*

Native speaker: Did you drop a line to you family?

ESL speaker: Dropped what?

Native speaker: Dropped a line.

ESL speaker: How can I do it?

Native speaker: I mean did you write a letter?

ESL speaker: Not yet. I need enclosure.

The conversation is considered as heterogeneous and there is a breakdown caused by the ESL speaker. It is widely recognized that, English vocabulary is so rich in idioms, phrasal verbs and dialectal words which are major problematic features of the language for non-native speakers. In that communication, the ESL speaker also encountered breakdown based on unfamiliar phrase for him.

Naturally, most language learners pay attention to the standard English and try to study them. On the contrast, in daily speech native speakers use informal variant of the words, phrases and the like. In the same way, he did not know the equivalent of “to write a short letter or note”.

N-S: Would you like to meet Missiz Iris?

NN-S: Meet whom?

N-S: Missiz Iris, my flatmate.

NN-S: Good idea.

In this type of repair example taken from the conversation that breakdown occurred, there is a question word with the partial repeat of the piece of the sentence which made the trouble for them. Here, the ESL speaker is fazed by the word “Iris”, that is because, this word has several meanings:

- 1) Iris is a tall type of plant with large purple, yellow, or white flowers and long pointed leaves.
- 2) As a medical term, it is the colored part of your eye around the small black circle that is called the pupil.

As I stated above, the second speaker did not know the usage of the word “iris” as a proper noun likewise many others: “Rose”, “Magnolia”, “Lily” and the like.

2.4 *Partial Repeat*

N-S: Well, we’ll have a talk with applicants by two.

NN-S: Two?

N-S: From one ten to two. It is our agenda.

NN-S: Why exactly from one ten?

N-S: It is the time for break in the area of stock-exchange.

NN-S: Now everything is clear.

The conversation is likely to break by communication disruption. In consequence of it, non-native speaker had to use the strategy of partial repeat of the trouble source. That is, the problematic point is repeated by saying “two” again in the second turn. Then the native speaker completed the repair by clarifying the time.

N-S: You'll be asked to have a PhD as an access to the symposium.

NN-S: A PhD?

N-S: It is the type of qualification.

NN-S: Like a GCSE?

N-S: Exactly, but it is the highest one.

NN-S: I see.

One of the highest repair strategy used by EFL speakers is partial repeat. Unlike "understanding check", the partial repeat does not include lengthy utterances. Just the notion is asked which unclear or not so understandable. It is reasonable to conclude that, if an EFL speaker encounters communication breakdown, he/she can utilize this type of communication tactic as the easiest one. That's why, it will be understandable to the native speaker which piece of utterance is unclear or confusing for them while interacting. They know what is troublesome for them or blocking their conversation, then they easily repeat that. The only thing is demanded by native speaker is affirmation and support certainly.

NS: Which is the property of animals: hind or skull?

NN-S: Hind?

N-S: Yes, hindmost we sometimes say.

NN-S: That is evocable, thanks.

N-S: Ok, next one: What place has palace, you know?

NN-S: Um...Palace?

3. Result

If the students encounter communication breakdown and they are strategic competent as well as pragmatic competent they will easily overcome the communication difficulty. Because we already created it in the lesson process. Furthermore, in order to be a successful EFL speaker must have other some features:

- They must be willing to admit a hearing problem.
- They must have a will to explain the problem to people when appropriate.
- They must able to suggest ways to improve communication.

4. Discussion

If we teach our students the secrets of language use, they are enable to communicate their thoughts in actual contexts long after they have left the language classroom. These will no doubt, help EFL students not only in the process of communication, but also in a good number of other ways. That is because, pragmatic failures will not occur and obviously, communication will not broken down as well. Since non-native speakers often find themselves lacking the very necessary resources needed to communicate their intended goal, it seems natural that foreign language teachers should foster strategic competence among our students and provide learning opportunities to develop communication

strategies. To the top, we need to encourage our learners to be risk-takers. If they are not risk-takers, they will not learn too much. Significantly, the strategies are employed by non-native English speakers to compensate for any difficulties they encountered during communication strategies are important in helping learners to communicate successfully when they are faced with a production problem due to their lack of linguistic knowledge.

In conclusion, strategic competence is a crucial component in foreign language learning. Non-native speakers must be resilient as well as quick-witted to hold the conversation meaningful and beneficial for both interlocutors. Therefore, creation of strategic competence is the essential demand for being good converser and avoider from communication breakdown. We would like to propose those steps which must be taught and if our learners follow this advice, it will help them to develop their skills. That is because, as non-native speakers of English they speak a limited amount of English. But we know it can be developed over time with practice.

References

- Bach, K., & Harnish, R. (1979). *Linguistic communication and speech acts*. Cambridge Press.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841\(79\)90047-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841(79)90047-0)
- Barnes, D. (1976). *From communication to Curriculum*. University of Illinois Press.
- Brumfit, K. J. (1998). *The communicative Approach to Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Carol, D. (2005). *Strategies to overcoming communication breakdown*.
- Claire, K. (1994). *Context and culture in Language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Eric, W. H. (1999). *Foreign Language Study and Language Awareness*. University of York.
- Hawkins, E.W, (1985). *Using language*. Cambridge University.
- Jack, S. (2011). *Competence*. Blackwell publishers.
- Johnson, K. (1979). *Communicative approaches and communicative processes*.
- Julia, M. D. (1996). *Effective Techniques for English Conversation Groups*.
- Van Lier, L. (1988). *The classroom and the language learner*. New York: Longman.
- Van Patten, B. (1990). *Second language Acquisition-Foreign Language Learning*. Clevedon, England.