Teachers' Use of Communication Strategies in Tanzanian Kiswahili Second Language Classrooms

Tamasha Kitalima
The Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Department of Education,
E-mail: kitalimat@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
When using a second language in classroom interaction both teachers and learners face language mismatch due to limited target language linguistic resources. Nonetheless, most research on classroom interaction in second language classrooms have focused on learners, ignoring teachers' use of communication strategies. Since such studies have overlooked the interactional perspective of communication strategies, exploring how native-speaking teachers use communication strategies was important. Accordingly, this paper examined teachers' use of communication strategies in Kiswahili as a second language classroom in Tanzania. In particular, it identified the communication strategies used by KSL native-speaking teachers and determined such teachers' use of communication strategies in classroom interaction. This qualitative case study involved three KSL teachers who were purposively selected from the Kiswahili na Utamaduni– Msasani Training Centre in Dar es Salaam. Observation and interview were used to collect data, which were then analysed thematically. The findings show that communication strategies compensate for language mismatches in the negotiation of meaning for Swahili language learners and higher proficient interlocutors as well as native speakers. In addition, the teachers used communication strategies for the purposes other than those of their learners. Therefore, this study recommends research on CSs to consider

the interactionist perspective by considering native speakers as an important part, given that most previous studies were learner-centred.

Keywords: *Communication strategies, Kiswahili as a Second Language teacher, Classroom interaction*

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on Communication strategies (CSs) – a recent area of applied linguistics, mark their beginning in the 1970s in Selinker's (1972) seminal work introducing CSs as one of the significant strands of interlanguage (IL). Thereafter, a number of studies on CSs emerged. The earlier studies attempted to explain the notion "communication strategies" (Corder, 1981; Tarone, 1981), to introduce taxonomies which categorised the CSs (Bialystock, 1983; Dornyei & Scott, 1995; Paribakht, 1985; Tarone, 1977), and to investigate the use and impact of CSs in second language (SL) classroom instructions (Brett, 2001; Maleki, 2010; Sukirlan, 2014).

Such studies defined CSs as a way in which SL learners deal with the difficulties they encounter in communication where their linguistic resources are inadequate (cf. Fearch & Kasper, 1981; Tarone, 1977). This approach is based on what Corder (1981) calls "a simplifying assumption." That is, native speakers do not use CSs because they have the perfect command of the target language (TL), but SL learners do. With such an assumption, the previous studies on CSs did not pay attention to the way teachers/native speakers use CSs in classroom interaction.

In terms of the taxonomies of CSs, researchers have grouped strategies into different taxonomies. For example, Tarone (1977) categorised strategies as avoidance, paraphrase, conscious

transfer, and appeal for assistance; Fearch and Kasper (1983) categorised strategies as formal reduction, functional reduction, and achievement; Bialystok (1983) grouped such strategies as L1-based strategies, L2-based strategies, and non-linguistic strategies. Moreover, Paribakht (1985) categorised strategies as linguistic-based strategies, contextually based strategies, conceptually based strategies, and mime; Dörnyei and Scott (1995) categorised them as direct strategies, interactional strategies, and indirect strategies.

The present study adopts Dörnyei and Scott's (1995, pp. 188 - 190) Taxonomy because it is aimed at investigating KSL teachers' use of CSs when interacting with their learners. Grounded in this taxonomy, researchers can investigate CSs by focusing on mutual comprehensibility between, for example, Kiswahili native-speaking teachers and KSL learners (Hmaid, 2014). (Appendix 1)

In researching CSs in SL teaching, researchers focused on the "teachability" of CSs and their impact on SL classrooms (Dorneyi, 1995; Maleki, 2007; Nakatani, 2005; Sukirlan, 2014). Findings from these studies reveal that learners can be trained in using some strategies since they have a salient contribution to classroom SL learning. Contrary to the interactional taxonomies of CSs (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Tarone, 1981), the findings from these studies are based on only the learners' use of CSs.

Nevertheless, few studies have specifically looked at teachers' use of CSs. Generally, these studies noted that such teachers used discourse rather than lexical based strategies (Azar & Mohammadzadeh, 2013). In addition, teachers and students relied more on code-switching than on other strategies

(Cervetes & Rodriguez, 2012). It should be noted that most previous studies involved non-native speaking teachers as advanced learners of the TLs. The reason is that CSs were perceived to be used by language learners only, an notion that stemmed from the assumption that native speakers (NS) have the perfect command of the language and the topic under discussion (Corder, 1981). Conversely, the present study focused on Kiswahili native teachers' use of CSs in KSL classroom interaction.

In addition, previous studies largely focused on European and Asian contexts using TLs such as English, Spanish, Japanese, and Arabic. Yet, empirical studies reveal that the type and use of CSs is determined by contextual factors (Bialystock & Frohlich, 1980; Smith, 2003) and speakers' TL proficiency (Aono & Hillis, 1979; Paribakht, 1985). Considering these factors, a study that would collect data in the Tanzanian context, using Kiswahili native teachers was worth conducting. Accordingly, this study drew on the social interactionist perspective to explore the use of CSs by native-speaking teachers of KSL in Kiswahili as a second language classroom in Tanzania. Specifically, the present study is guided by two research questions:

i.   What are the types of communication strategies used?

ii. How do native teachers of KSL use communication strategies in classroom interaction?

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the above questions, the present study adopted largely qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach is in line with the present study's objective that seeks to offer an in-depth understanding of Kiswahili native teachers' use of CSs in the KSL classroom context. The study

involved three native-speaking teachers of KSL from Kiswahili na Utamaduni (KIU) Centre located in Msasani - Dar es Salaam. This centre was established in 1985 offering Kiswahili language training using Kiswahili native-speaking trainers (henceforth teachers). KIU has more than twenty teachers training more than 160 students per year, and such trainees come from various nations including the USA, UK, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Kenya, Uganda, to mention a few. This study area was appropriate for the present study because, normally, the area has KSL learners throughout the year as well as many class sessions, which allow conducting several observation sessions.

Three teachers were purposefully selected where two (one male and the other female) were teaching beginner level classes and one (female) was teaching an intermediate level class. The three KSL teachers were enough for this exploratory case study since case studies are normally more effectively conducted with fewer participants (Mackey & Gass, 2005). All the three teachers had taught for at least 15 years. In the present study, the three teachers are pseudonym as Teacher One (T1), Teacher Two (T2), and Teacher Three (T3). Basing on the study's objectives, data were collected in two sets focusing on two aspects: the types of CSs used by the KSL teachers and the way they used such strategies via classroom observation and personal interviews respectively. The use of repeated observations (three for each teacher), allowed to gain a deeper and more understanding of how the KSL teachers used CSs in the classroom context (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The personal interview questions allowed exploring the teachers' perspectives regarding their use of CSs.

Data were transcribed and coded basing on Dörnyei and Scott's (1995) taxonomy of CSs. Data were thematically analysed.

Thematic analysis was useful in finding repeated patterns of meanings which provided the ground
for identifying important themes out of the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of Strategies Used by the KSL Teachers in Classroom Interaction

Considering the first research question, the strategies presented under this section are based on a modified version of Dörnyei and Scott's (1995) Taxonomy of CSs. Table 1 shows the CSs used by the teachers in KSL classrooms.

Table 1: Types and frequencies of CSs used by native speaking teachers of KSL during classroom observation

S/N	CSs Used by Teachers	T1	%	T2	%	T3	%	Total CSs	Total %
1	Code-switching	21	15	12	12	31	23	64	17
2	Self-repetition	14	10	10	1	21	15	45	12
3	Mime/non-verbal cues	15	11	8	8	22	16	45	12
4	Comprehension check	29	21	7	7	5	7	41	11
5	Other repair	17	12	17	17	5	4	39	10
6	Circumlocution/ paraphrase	18	5	12	12	6	4	26	7
7	Literal translation	10	7	1	1	13	9	23	6
8	Other repetition	5	3.6	4	4	14	10	23	6
9	Use of fillers	5	3.6	10	1	6	4	21	6
10	Asking for confirmation	5	3.6	12	12	5	7	22	6
11	Asking for clarification	7	5	8	8	6	4	21	6
12	Approximation	2	1.3	5	2.6	6	6	13	2.5
13	Asking for repetition	3	2	1	1	0	0	4	1
14	Appeal for assistance	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	1
	TOTAL	**139**	**100**	**101**	**100**	**138**	**100**	**378**	**100**

Table 1 indicates the types and frequencies of CSs used by the KSL teachers to interact with their learners in the classroom.

The table shows that code-switching was the most frequently used strategy (17%) whereas asking for repetition and appeal for assistance were the least frequently used strategies (1%). By considering individual teachers, each teacher's use of CS was different that of the others in terms of the frequencies of CSs used. For instance, T1 used mainly comprehension checks (21%) and code switching (15%); T2 used other repetitions (17%) and code-switching (12%), while T3 relied mostly on code-switching (23%) and self-repetition (12%).

Of all these CSs, the KSL teachers relied mainly on 'code-switching, non-verbal cues, self-repetition and comprehension checks. Previous studies reported that speakers' choice of the type of CSs is largely influenced by his/her proficiency level (Maldonado, 2016; Paribakht, 1985; Tarone, 1977).

The findings of the present study are in contrast with those in a study by Paribakht (1985), who studied the relationship between speakers' proficiency in the TL and their choices of the types of CSs. The findings indicated that higher proficient learners and native speakers used the linguistic-based strategies the most such as paraphrase and literal translation while mimes/non-verbal cues were rarely used by native speakers and advanced learners. In contrast in the present study, the Kiswahili native-speaking teachers mainly used mimes/non-verbal cues. The differences in the high frequency of mimes/non-verbal cues in the present study as opposed to Paribakht's study might be attributed to the fact that the teachers who participated in the present study were not only native speakers of Kiswahili but also they were teachers of the TL. They used non-verbal cues for instructional purposes. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that the status of the interlocutors (the relationship between the SL learner and

higher proficient interlocutor) may also influence the choice of CSs used.

Contextual factors can also be used to explain the difference between the findings of the present study and that of Paribakht (1985). Paribakht aimed at comparing the strategies used by a native-speaking group against a non-native speaking group outside the classroom context. In contrast, the present study aimed at exploring teachers' use of CSs in the classroom context. Apparently, the context of interaction influences the choice of CSs (see also Bialystock & Frohlich, 1980; Smith, 2003).

The way KSL teachers use communication strategies in classroom interaction
This section illustrates how all three teachers used CSs during classroom interaction based on classroom observation and interview data.

Code-switching
As indicated in Table 2, this was the most frequently used strategy by the teachers. The teachers switched from Kiswahili to English or Japanese in order to elaborate grammatical features of Kiswahili as a TL. In addition, they switched from Kiswahili to English or Japanese in order to introduce new topics to the learners. The following excerpt exemplifies the use of code-switching by the teachers:
(1)   T1:   kitu chochote ambacho unaoka yaani *using oven* yaani ninaoka kuku. 'any food that you bake (using oven); for instance, I bake chicken'

       T3:   sawa, sasa... sasa.. tu .. tutajifunza *to be....*
              'Ok, now....now... we will learn about the verb "to be"'

       T3:   lakini tunajifunza to be in.. in order to be able to express ourselves... 'but we learn the verb "to be" in order to express ourselves..'

Literal/Direct Translation

In the data collected, this strategy was used by the KSL teachers to help learners understand Kiswahili terms. The following excerpt is illustrative:

SS: *Biashara?*
   'business'

T1:   ee.. biashara ni *business*!
   'ee..   business is ...'

S4: na njegere mbichi?
   'what about green peas?'

T3: njegere mbichi ni *green peas*
   'green peas is...'

In the excerpt above, the teachers used literal translation to help the learners understand some Kiswahili lexical items by translating them to English. For example, T3 helped Student 4 to understand the meaning of the Kiswahili phrase *njegere mbichi* by translating it directly to the English phrase 'green peas.'

Other Repairs

During the observation, all three teachers used other repairs to correct learners' incorrect lexical items and utterances. Most of the repairs observed involved explicit correction by the teachers as shown in the following excerpt:

(2) S: jana tutakula.
     'yesterday we will eat'[1]
   T1: hapana tulikula. Baadae baada ya mapumnziko
     tutakula.

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[1] Some excerpts look grammatically incorrect because the present study purposely intends to show them as they were produced by the respondents themselves.

'No we ate. Later, after the break, we will eat'
S4: aa... namba **mili**...
'number two – incorrect'
T3: namba **mbili**
'number two – correct'

Self-repetition

In the classroom observation sessions, the teachers used self-repetition to insist on a lexical item or a concept. The following excerpt illustrates this phenomenon:

(3) T1: aahaa leo... leo mchana tutaendaaa.. sokoni.
'aahaa today..today afternoon we will go to the market'
T2: *mpendwa, mpendwa* Kama *mpendwa* shangazi.
'dear, dear like dear aunt'
T3: *kijana, kijana....kijana...kijana.*
'repeats the Swahili word for *youth.*'

Other Repetitions

Other repetitions involve repeating something the interlocutor said, to gain time. However, the collected data
 show that the teachers repeated learners' utterances for purposes other than gaining time. The following excerpt is worth considering,

SS: aaaa in book
T1: umm... *book.*
T3: Daktari..unajua daktari?
'a doctor.... do you know who a doctor is?'
S1: doctor?
T3: doctor.

As shown in Excerpt 6, other repetitions were used by T1 to show that they understood what the learners were saying, and

in the same excerpt, T3 used other repetitions to reinforce the correct responses given by S1.

Use of Fillers
During classroom observation, fillers were used by the teachers not because they lacked linguistic resources but because they needed time to think of the appropriate terms for their learners. The following excerpt shows how the teachers used this strategy:

(4) T1: ee... mtaenda sokoni.. na... eee.. mtaenda kuzungumza na watanzania.
'ee.. you will go to the market.. and.. eee.. you will speak with Tanzanians'

S: tunafanya nini?
'what do we do?'

T2: eeh... tunasubiri.
'eeh.. we wait'.

In some cases, fillers were also used to slow down the pace so that the learners could follow the teachers' conversation easily. For example, in Excerpt 5, T1 used the filler "...Eee..." to describe slowly where the learners would go on that day.

Comprehension Checks
Comprehension checks involve asking questions to check that the interlocutor follows the speaker. During classroom observation, the teachers used comprehension checks to determine whether the learners were following them. The following excerpt is illustrative:

(5) T1: Eee.. mfanyabiashara tasu.. wafanyabiashara ukusu *sawa*?
'eee.. businessman' singular.. businessmen plural right?'

SSS: Sawaa!
     'Right?'

T3:   negative ni 'si.' Si – I'm not, is not, are not. *Sawa?*
     'negative is "si". Si- I'm not, is not, are not. Ok?'

SSS: (silence)

In all instances, the words *sawa* and *sawasawa eh* were used by all three teachers. Some checks were responded to by the learners, while others were not; in such cases, the teachers did not reinforce them by asking again.

Therefore, the teachers sometimes used comprehension checks without considering whether they were communicating anything to the learners.

Circumlocution/Paraphrasing

During classroom observation, the teachers used circumlocution to describe difficult concepts to the learners, to differentiate concepts, and to help learners in elaborating different grammatical features. Therefore, contrary to learners, who normally use circumlocution because of lacking relevant lexical items, the teachers in this study used the strategy to help their learners understand complex vocabularies, as shown in the following excerpt.

(12)   SS: oka. Unguza?
       'Burn'

     T1:   yes oka. Kama una..unaunguza mkate basi naiva saaana na rangi ni nyeusi.

       'Yes bake. If you burn then bread becomes black'

Non-verbal Cues

In the classroom observation sessions, the teachers used facial expressions to communicate understanding, agreement, or disagreement on learners' responses. They used actions to elaborate new vocabularies especially pertaining to verbs. They also used hands and fingers to show numbers, intensity, and the degree of particular phenomena. Pictures and drawings were used only once by T2; the teacher used flashcards to teach the learners names of vegetables and fruits.

Approximation

The following excerpts show how the teachers used approximation:

(14)   S: Chakula kinapendwa na watoto.
               'the food is liked by children'
       T2:   *asante sana* sasa hiyo ndio passive
               'Thank you that is all about passive sentences'
       T3:   arobaini na tisa "a". Lakini "a" *chizi kidooogo*
               'forty-nine 'a'. But it is a bit tricky,

In the excerpt above, both T2 and T3 used the words 'asante' and 'chizi' as alternatives to 'vizuri' (good) and 'gumu' (tricky) respectively. The purpose was to help the learners get the concepts by using alternative words, which were familiar to them.

In addition, the structured interview was conducted with the teachers to get the introspective information on the use of CSs. The interviews focused on understanding how the native teachers of KSL used CSs to deal with communication breakdowns with the learners in classroom interaction.

Concerning the strategies, which the teachers used to overcome communication breakdowns, the data collected show that, T1 and T2 used pictures whereas T3 used demonstrations to help learners who could not understand the lesson. T2 used pictures and body language while T1 and T3 used topic avoidance to deal with the learners who were not interested in the subject matter. When the learners mumbled to themselves, T1 and T2 encouraged them to talk by giving them time while T3 asked them to speak. T2 had the following to say:

> "Huwa inatokea lakini akimung'unya maneno ninamwambia hamna shida, ongea tu, ongea hamna shida baadae basi anaanza kusema kidogo anasita. Baadae anaanza kusema lile neno." (T2)

"It happens, but, when a learner mumbles to themselves, I encourage them to keep on talking based on what they know. Initially, they stuck but later they utter the word." (T2)

Another interview question was on the strategies, which were considered as mostly used by the teachers in classroom interaction for ascertaining teachers' awareness of the CSs they use. In responding to the question, the three teachers reported to have been using pictures, demonstrations, examples, literal translation, non-verbal cues, topic abandonment, confirmation checks, and asking for repetition. The use of pictures was the most frequent strategy as mentioned by the teachers. This is followed by the use of demonstrations and examples. The following excerpts reveal the answers given by the teachers:

> "*Mimi natumia zaidi picha, kudemo, na direct translation.*" *(T1)*
> "*I use mostly pictures, demonstrations, and direct translation.*" *(T1)*

"Mimi natumia zaidi vitendo, picha, na mifano." (T2)
"I mostly use actions, pictures, and examples.... " (T2)
"Kwa mimi inategemeana na mwanafunzi. Kama mwanafunzi tunashare lugha lazima nitachanganya. Lakini kama mwanafunzi hatuna lugha yoyote tunayoshare lazima nitatumia zaidi demonstration pamoja na picha." (T3)

"As for me, it depends on the learners. If we speak the same language, I will certainly use code-switching; however, if we do not speak the same language, I will definitely rely on demonstrations and pictures." (T3)

The findings show that the teachers used code switching in elaborating grammatical features, introducing new topics, and alternating strategies when some strategies fail to facilitate communication. The teachers used literal translation not only in directly translating lexical items to learners but also in helping those who seemed to struggle to get proper words. a similar study was carried out by Doqaruni (2013) whereby EFL teachers, as advanced learners, used CSs such as code-switching to overcome language deficit. In contrast with Doqaruni's (2013) study, the present study has demonstrated that the teachers used CSs not because of the linguistic deficit but because of facilitating learners' understanding of the lesson. Thus, native speakers and non-native speakers use CSs to fulfil different purposes.

In addition, native-speaking teachers used other repairs as competent interlocutors to explicitly correct learners' incorrect responses. In addition, the teachers used self-repetition to add emphasis to the said lexical item rather than struggling for the next word as second language learners do. These findings are in line with the observation in a study by n Dörnyei and Scott (1997) that, self-repetition is a sub-type of processing pressure

under indirect strategies. In this strategy, L2 speakers need more time to process and plan L2 speech than native speakers would. This is in line with the present study's findings; the teachers used the strategy because they needed time not only to process the TL but also to show that they understood their learners when such learners gave correct responses. Moreover, the teachers used fillers not only to gain time but also to slow down the rate of speech to help the learners follow them easily.

From the interview data, the teachers' responses indicate that the respondents mainly relied on pictures, demonstrations, and examples to overcome different communication breakdowns in classrooms. Among the nine examples, teachers reported to have used pictures in five instances. However, teachers' observation that they used pictures most frequently contradicts with the findings from the observation data. During the observation sessions, neither T1 nor T3 used pictures, although certain instances required them to do so. In contrast, only T2 used pictures once. Thus, these textures' cognizance of the CSs that they use during classroom interaction is questionable.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The interactionist perspective of CSs (cf. Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Tarone, 1981) holds that CSs are used by both higher proficient interlocutors and SL learners to overcome linguistic mismatch and for negotiating meaning. However, most studies did not pay sufficient attention on the manner in which native speakers (teachers) use CSs to facilitate interaction. Based on this assumption, the present study set out to identify communication strategies used by KSL native-speaking teachers and determined teachers' use of communication strategies in the Tanzanian KSL classroom context. In the light of the findings presented, the KSL teachers used CSs for the purposes different from those of their learners. The present

study is significant in several ways. Theoretically, the study
emphasises on the need for studies on CSs to consider the
interactionist perspective by regarding native speakers as an
important part, given that most previous studies were learner-
centred. Thus, more CSs studies on native speakers are needed.
Pedagogically, the findings show that CSs have a salient
contribution to Second Language Learning (SLL). Therefore,
KSL teachers are urged to consider using CSs to facilitate
classroom communication.

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Appendix 1: Inventory, classification, and definition of CSs adopted from Dörnyei and Scott (1997)

S/N	Strategy	Description
1	Message abandonment	*Leaving a message unfinished because of some language difficulties*
2	Circumlocution	*Exemplifying, illustrating, or describing the properties of a TL object/action*
3	Approximation	*Using a single alternative, lexical item, such as features with the TL word which shares semantic features with a target word*
4	Word coinage	*Creating a non-existent L2 word by applying a supposed L2 rule to an existing L2 word*
5	Restructuring	*Leaving the utterance unfinished, and communicating the intended message according to an alternative plan*
6	Literal translation	*Translating literally a lexical item, an idiom, a compound word or structure from L1 to L2*
7	Foreignising	*Using a L2 word with L1 phonology and/or morphology*
8	Code-switching	*Including L1 words with L2 speech: this may involve stretching from a single word to a whole sentence*
9	Non-verbal cues	*Describing whole concepts non-verbally or accompanying a verbal strategy with a visual illustration*
10	Appeal for assistance	*Turning to the interlocutor for assistance by asking explicit questions concerning a gap in one's L2 knowledge*
11	Expressing non-understanding	*Expressing that one did not understand something properly either verbally or no-verbally*
12	Guessing	*Similar to confirmation request, except that guessing involves real indecision*
13	Verbal strategy markers	*Using verbal marking phrases before or after a strategy to signal that the word or structure does not carry the intended meaning perfectly in the L2 code*

S/N	Strategy	Description
14	Responses	*Responding to the interlocutor by repeating, repairing, rephrasing, expanding, or confirming what the other interlocutor has said.*
15	Other-repetition	*Repeating something the interlocutor said to gain time*
16	Self–repetition	*Repeating a word or a string of words immediately after they were said*
17	Self –rephrasing	*Repeating a term but not quite as it is, but by adding something or using rephrase*
18	Other-repair	*Correcting something in the interlocutor's speech*
19	Self-repair	*Making self-initiated correction in one's own speech*
21	Omission	*Leaving a gap when not knowing a word and carrying on as if it had been said.*
22	Mumbling	*Swallowing or muttering inaudibly a word (or part of a word) whose correct form the speaker is uncertain about*
23	Use of similar sound words	*Compensating for a lexical item whose form the speakers is unsure of with a word (either existing or non-existing) which sound more or less like the target item.*
24	Message replacement	*Substituting the original message with a new one because of not feeling capable of executing it*
25	Use of all-purpose words	*Extending a general "empty" lexical item to the context where specific items are lacking*
26	Comprehension checks	*Asking questions to check that the interlocutor can follow you*
27	Asking for repetition	*Requesting repetition when one has not heard/understood something properly*
28	Asking for clarification	*Requesting explanations of an unfamiliar meaning structure*
29	Use of fillers	*Using gambits to fill pauses, to stall, and to gain time in order to keep the communication channel open*

S/N	Strategy	Description
30	Repetitions	*Repeat utterances of another interlocutor to gain time/for insistence*
31	Feigning understanding	*Attempting to carry on with the conversation in spite of not understanding something by pretending that it has been understood*
32	Asking for confirmation	*Requesting confirmation that one heard or understood something correctly*

Source: Dörnyei & Scott, (1997)