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**DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND  
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE: STRATEGIC  
COMPETENCE IN EFL/ESL MATERIALS**

**MA thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to find out whether strategic competence is part of EFL/ESL materials, whether attention is explicitly drawn to it, and which methods are used to develop it. To do so, the concepts of communicative competence, intercultural communication competence and strategic competence itself are discussed, as well as the nature and role of commercially produced coursebooks. The materials analysed are introduced along with the research methodology. The results of the analysis are presented, followed by a discussion of results, and conclusions.

Strategic competence, which is composed of communication strategies that can be used to overcome breakdowns in communication, forms part of both communicative competence and intercultural communication competence, which are both set as goals in the Estonian national curricula. Therefore, components of strategic competence should also be part of EFL/ESL materials.

To find out if strategic competence is represented in EFL/ESL materials, three sets of commercially produced materials have been analysed – the student's book, teacher's book, and audio materials of *Premium B1*, *Upstream Intermediate*, and *Solutions Intermediate*.

Results show that although half of the components of strategic competence outlined by Celce-Murcia et al (1995: 28) are included in these materials, they are explicitly discussed in very few cases. In addition, out of the six components of strategic competence instruction outlined by Celce-Murcia et al (1995: 29), only three have been fully utilised.

The research indicates that in order for students to master the communication strategies that form strategic competence, there needs to be an increase in awareness of strategic competence and a change in what EFL/ESL materials include, how the material is presented and what kind of activities are used.

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## INTRODUCTION

Given the variety of different cultures which Estonian students of English may come into contact with in their lives, it would be irrational to assume that they could be taught how a wide variety of intentions and thoughts are expressed in all of the cultures they could encounter, or what the myriad of possible actions by their communication partners may be intended to convey. Therefore, communication is more likely to run into problems in instances of intercultural communication. To successfully overcome these issues, the communicators need to have communicative competence and intercultural competence – two somewhat interrelated notions. Strategic competence (and the communication strategies it is composed of) is a fundamental part of both of these larger competencies, and is therefore a relevant topic in language teaching. The ability to use strategic competence can help overcome issues and breakdowns that occur in communication, whether intercultural or not. Both intercultural communication competence and communicative competence have also been set as goals in the Estonian national curricula. However, the role of strategic competence and the use of communicative strategies in EFL/ESL materials have not been studied sufficiently.

Strategic competence is too narrow a topic to have received much particular attention up until now. As stated by Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991: 17), it is the component of communicative competence that has received the least attention. The aim of this research is to find out whether strategic competence, which is part of intercultural communication competence and communicative competence, is represented in EFL/ESL teaching materials, whether attention is explicitly drawn to it, and which methods are used to develop it as part of intercultural communication competence and communicative competence. The findings will enable making tentative conclusions as to whether there

needs to be a change in materials' production; also, as teachers are unlikely to attribute much attention to strategic competence when in the process of materials evaluation, these findings have the potential of raising awareness of its value and relevance – not only for choosing materials, but also in language teaching in general. The aim is not to give a thorough overall evaluation of any set of materials, but to find out how much attention is given to strategic competence in English coursebooks used in Estonian schools; therefore, materials that are found to be lacking in explicit activities and discussion or the implicit inclusion of the communicative strategies that form strategic competence may nevertheless be of value in other areas of language teaching.

In order to explain the importance of strategic competence within pertinent theoretical frameworks, the paper will first give an overview of the relevant literature, concentrating on the concepts of communicative competence, intercultural communication competence, strategic competence itself (as part of the two aforementioned competencies and as a relevant notion in its own right), and the characteristics and nature of commercially produced English teaching materials and the role they have in a typical EFL/ESL classroom. This makes it possible to see why strategic competence is important in the context of EFL/ESL instruction and what could and should be expected from modern English coursebooks. In order to see if strategic competence is part of mainstream teaching materials, its prominence (whether it is explicitly drawn attention to), and which methods are used to teach it, the contents of three sets of materials will be analysed – the student's book, teacher's book and audio materials of *Upstream Intermediate* (2002), *Premium B1* (2008), and *Solutions Intermediate* (2008). The data received will be presented, with the findings from the student's books, teacher's books and audio materials discussed in their respective sections. The results will be followed by a discussion, explaining what these

findings mean in the context of this thesis and what wider implications they have in terms of language teaching. The discussion will be followed by conclusions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Communicative competence

To understand the necessity of strategic competence, one has to know where it fits in in terms of general communication theories that are related to it, the most important ones being communicative competence and intercultural communication competence.

Communicative competence is the ability of a language user to use a language correctly and appropriately. The term was coined by Hymes (1972: 282), who disagreed with Chomsky's (1965: 3) theory of linguistic competence which argued that linguistic knowledge is an innate quality; Hymes stated that 'competence is dependent upon both (tacit) *knowledge* and (ability for) *use*', highlighting the importance of learnable knowledge and skills. Therefore, a successful interlocutor in any language context must have the necessary theoretical knowledge, as well as the ability to put it into practice, and these can be enhanced and developed by the use of appropriate language teaching and learning materials. When one is communicating in a foreign language and/or with a member of a culture different from one's own (situations which language learners in Estonia and elsewhere are likely to encounter), knowing how, when, and what to communicate (i.e. which communication strategies to use) becomes exceedingly complicated and communicative competence is harder to achieve than it is in monocultural situations in which interlocutors use their first languages.

The Estonian national curricula also highlight the need for developing communicative competence. The national curriculum for the gymnasium level (Vabariigi Valitsus 2011: 3) states that language teaching aims at developing a number of competencies, including social competence (which consists of the ability to understand

cultural and behavioural norms), and communicative competence (consisting of the ability to express oneself and understand others), thus corresponding to the aforementioned definition of communicative competence as the ability to use a language both correctly and appropriately.

The nature of communication strategies, the correct use of which leads to communicative competence, has been discussed at length by Tarone (1980: 427), who differentiates between communication strategies and repairs. In her work, communication strategies are ‘a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared (ibid.: 419)’, which can be caused by cultural or linguistic differences, whereas repairs are to do with linguistic forms and their corrections. The notion of communication strategies was elaborated on by Corder (1981: 103, cited in Wood, 2010: 51), who defines it as a ‘systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his (or her) meaning when faced with some difficulty’, allowing interlocutors to at least attempt solving any problems that are encountered in communication.

As it was realised that problems in communication are more likely to occur in situations in which the language users are not using their first language and also have to account for cultural differences, the notion of communicative competence became relevant in language teaching and learning. The first model of communicative competence that was intended to be used in second language teaching, proposed by Canale and Swain (1980: 28), consisted of three components – grammatical competence (knowledge of morphology, syntax, phonology, vocabulary, *etc*), strategic competence (knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that can be used when faced with a breakdown in communication), and sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of appropriate use of language in a given social situation, ensuring correct understanding). Therefore, this model



stepped closer to the field of intercultural communication, including the necessity of repairs in communication and the relevant communication strategies to make these repairs. Canale later elaborated on it, adding discourse competence (knowledge of how to use language to produce different types of texts) as a separate item (beforehand, it was grouped under sociolinguistic competence). Taking this model as their starting point and specifically having language teaching in mind, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995: 10) developed their own model of communicative competence, consisting of five different components – linguistic, strategic, sociocultural, actional, and discourse competence. In their view, strategic competence is ‘an ever-present, potentially usable inventory of skills that allows a strategically competent speaker to negotiate messages and resolve problems or to compensate for deficiencies in any other underlying competencies (ibid: 9)’, making it possible for language users to continue communication regardless of the problems they encounter. Strategic competence thus becomes relevant not only in terms of linguistics, but interaction as a whole – as Auer (1992: 22) underlines, participants have to not only be able to take context into consideration, but also work together to establish it and make it available; for this, they need to be able to communicate and overcome the problems they meet.

Cooperating in a monolingual situation can cause a number of problems; however, these potential problems are exacerbated in intercultural communication, in which cultural and linguistic differences can add difficulty.

### **Intercultural communication competence**

Today, intercultural communication is more widespread than ever before, and students of English (in Estonia and elsewhere) are likely to find themselves in situations where they have to communicate with people from other cultures, using a language that they (as well as their communication partner) may not have yet mastered completely. In

these cases, communicative competence becomes increasingly important, and students are expected to be able to overcome problems of non- or misunderstanding caused by linguistic or cultural differences by using strategic competence.

The Estonian national curricula for basic schools and the gymnasium have set intercultural communication competence as one of the goals of language learning. By the end of the gymnasium, students are expected to be able to not only understand what is said in a foreign language, but also to be able to communicate according to cultural norms and understand and appreciate similarities and differences between cultures (Vabariigi Valitsus 2011). This corresponds to Chen and Starosta's (1996: 358-359) definition of intercultural communication competence, who define it as:

the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviours that recognize the interactants' multiple identities in a specific environment. This definition emphasizes that competent persons must know not only how to interact effectively and appropriately with people and environment, but also how to fulfil their own communication goals by respecting and affirming the multilevel cultural identities of those with whom they interact.

Their definition emphasises that successful acts of intercultural communication need awareness of the communicative intent, the linguistic features available, the people involved, the cultural similarities and differences that are pertinent to the situation, and the communicative strategies that are available to interlocutors in case communication runs into difficulty.

Therefore, intercultural communication competence is not only useful, but teaching it is also required by the curricula. This prepares students for situations in which they are expected to interact with people from other cultures, often in a language that is not their (and possibly also not their communication partner's) first language; in these situations, potential problems may arise due to differences in communicative styles, language use, language proficiency, etc. For example, one of the speakers involved might misunderstand the meaning of a word or phrase, or have difficulty interpreting body language. According

to Müller (2003: 54), misunderstandings in intercultural communication mostly arise because of the differing culture-specific value systems and social representations (what he calls ‘concepts’), or individual preferences of parties. The non-linguistic nature of many of these problems means that in some cases, the participants may not be able to distinguish what has gone wrong in a particular situation, and attribute the problem falsely – for example, when participant A is used to a significantly more direct communication style than participant B, they can find participant B to be evasive and confusing, whereas participant A could be found to be aggressive and demanding. This potential misunderstanding is also described by Roberts (1998: 113) when she points out that interpreting what is seen and heard in intercultural communication may be difficult and can have the effect of altering the perception of interlocutors’ intent, attitude, and competence, creating problems in the interactive situation at hand as well as generating more obstacles for future interactions. As Byram (1997: 49) notes, the participants of a situation of intercultural communication often have to deviate from the way they are used to interact (in their own culture and first language), both in terms of what and how they communicate – these changes may comprise of making sure that each participant can ask for clarifications or explanations at any point in interaction, the inclusion of meta-commentary, or presenting information in a more explicit way; these communicative strategies are also part of strategic competence, which communicative competence and intercultural communication rely on. The ability to use these strategies can determine success in interaction, and should therefore be enhanced.

The notion of intercultural communication competence can be seen as consisting of a number of competences, skills, and personality traits, and strategic competence or elements of it are included in many of these models. In more general terms, Willems (2002: 10) explains that interculturality ‘requires *knowledge* (of cultural factors), *insight* (into what

constitutes cultural identity), *readiness* (towards opening up to cultural differences) and *skills* (in negotiating ‘common territory’ and identifying and bridging gaps)’. Stahl (2001: 202) has divided intercultural communication competence into four elements: sociability, empathy, non-judgementalness, and meta-communication skills, and also lists behavioural indicators for each of these components. Since the first three elements in Stahl’s definition are to do with personality traits, developing these is more difficult. The last element in both Willem and Stahl’s definitions, however, is a skill – that of using appropriate strategies to overcome problems in communication, also known as strategic competence – which means that it could be taught and developed. Strategic competence is therefore an element that should not be overlooked when teaching intercultural communication competence.

Communicative competence and intercultural communication competence are therefore partially interrelated as the use of strategic competence (and the communication strategies it is composed of) is fundamental in both, and also because, according to researchers as well as the Estonian national curricula, they should both be part of language teaching and learning (and therefore, one could expect to find components of strategic competence in the content of EFL/ESL teaching materials).

### **Strategic competence**

Strategic competence thus forms an important part of two larger competencies that are relevant to EFL/ESL teaching in Estonia – communicative competence and intercultural communication competence. As defined by Canale and Swain (1980: 30), strategic competence can be described as ‘verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence’. Their understanding of the notion of strategic competence corresponds to that of Celce-Murcia et al (1995) who defined it as

part of their model of communicative competence discussed earlier. As Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991: 17) point out, strategic competence is an important part of communication in both L1 and L2 as difficulties are part of communication in both; however, it is even more important for foreign language speakers where it ‘may account for situations when students with a firm knowledge of grammar and a wide range of vocabulary get stuck and are unable to carry out their communicative intent (ibid)’. Strategic competence could help a learner when they are in a situation in which they are unable to use the correct vocabulary or grammar feature to express themselves, are unable to understand what has been said to them, or face problems when interpreting or sending messages non-verbally. Not only linguistic features, but also cultural differences can be the cause of problems in communicative situations (for example, in some cultures, important information is traditionally conveyed first, whereas in others, it tends to be left towards the end of the conversation) and to resolve these issues, interlocutors may need to use meta-communication. Stahl (2001: 202) describes a person with meta-communication skills as someone who ‘tries to dissolve ambiguities and misunderstandings, provides appropriate feedback, asks if he or she has been understood, negotiates rules of play for the conversation, summarizes contributions (ibid)’, thus making communication less ambiguous and ensuring a successful outcome. As Savignon (2002: 10) argues, misunderstandings and minor or major breakdowns in communication occur in a large variety of communicative situations and the ‘effective use of coping strategies is important for communicative competence in all contexts and distinguishes highly effective communicators from those who are less so’. Therefore, in the context of language education, strategic competence can make the difference between a student who can use the language that they have been taught effectively when faced with difficulty, and one who is not able to put their knowledge into use and therefore is not benefitting sufficiently

from all the time and effort that has been put into language learning by both the student and their teacher. Similarly, Williams (2006) points out that learners who are not able to use the relevant communication strategies are inclined to avoid taking risks in L2 and even avoid whole topics and situations. This goes against the goal of language teaching and learning, i.e. being able to communicate in a foreign language whenever necessary or wanted.

When working on their model of communicative competence, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995: 26) significantly elaborated on the notion of strategic competence (which is part of both communicative competence and intercultural communication competence). In their work, strategic competence consists of five types of strategies, each divided into a number of specific components. The first cluster of components can be grouped together under the title of *avoidance or reduction strategies*, consisting of message replacement, topic avoidance, and message abandonment. The second group, mainly used in case of insufficient knowledge of vocabulary, is *achievement or compensatory strategies*, consisting of circumlocution, approximation, all-purpose words, non-linguistic means, restructuring, word-coinage, literal translation from L1, foreignising, code switching to L1 or L3, and retrieval. The third group of strategies is grouped under the title *stalling or time-gaining strategies*, consisting of fillers, hesitation devices and gambits, and self and other-repetition. The fourth group, *self-monitoring strategies*, consists of self-initiated repairs and self-rephrasing (over-elaboration). The fifth and final group, *interactional strategies*, includes cooperative strategies, such as appeals for help (direct and indirect); meaning negotiation strategies – indicators of non- or misunderstanding such as requests, verbal and non-verbal expressions to indicate non-understanding, and interpretive summaries; responses to indications of problems, such as repetition, rephrasing, expansion, reduction, confirmation, rejection, and repair; and

comprehension checks to make sure whether the other person understands what is meant, whether what was said was correct, whether the interlocutor is listening and whether they can hear what is being said. This model of strategic competence and its components is one of the most detailed and clear ones available, and will therefore be used when analysing the three sets of EFL/ESL teaching materials (*Premium B1*, *Upstream Intermediate*, and *Solutions Intermediate*) chosen and establishing the role of strategic competence as part of these.

Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995: 29) also elaborate on what strategic competence teaching might actually include. They list six components of such instruction – making students aware of communication strategies and how they can be applied; encouraging students to take risks and use such strategies; present L2 examples of these strategies in use; clarifying the differences that exist in using communication strategies in different cultures; teaching these strategies explicitly by providing learners with the specific linguistic devices; and providing learners with sufficient opportunities to put this new knowledge into practice.

Since strategic competence is part of not only communication in a foreign language but also L1 communication, it can be argued that there is no need for spending valuable time on teaching something that learners already have knowledge of and are capable of implementing. Paribakht (1986: 60) argues that in many communicative situations (in his work, mainly in communication difficulties brought about due to lacking knowledge in basic vocabulary and grammar), the strategic competence that learners have in L1 is transferable and available for use in L2. However, he admits that teaching strategic competence may still have merits in communicative situations relating to other aspects of language, and that if strategic competence is not given much time and attention, some

focus on it might be beneficial as it could make it more readily available in situations where language learners are expected to use these strategies in L2 communication.

Furthermore, proponents of explicitly teaching strategic competence in language classes, such as Joseph Wood (2010: 52), argue that it could significantly improve communicative as well as intercultural communication competence and can therefore be highly beneficial. He conducted a year-long study and found that the explicit teaching of communication strategies along with having students do corresponding activities brought about a higher frequency of use of communication strategies, as well as a better understanding of the nature of these strategies. Although students used their strategic competence beforehand as well, explicit instruction helped them understand how and when they turned to these strategies for help, and how they could make better use of those strategies in the future, thus making the knowledge more available for use. This corresponds with O'Malley's (1987: 143) findings, which indicate that although working with the communication strategies that form strategic competence inevitably takes up valuable time, it can lead to significant improvements in class performance. Sato's (2005) research also suggests that learners could benefit highly from the explicit teaching of strategic competence – his work shows that when the features of strategic competence are explained once, it serves the function of raising awareness as only a few students could later implement that knowledge; however, when the material is recycled over a period of time, learners' strategic, as well as communicative competence improves significantly – in his experiment, students' conversations became longer and they admitted to feeling more confident in communicative situations.

Commenting on the teachability of communication strategies, Dörnyei (1995: 79) argues that most of the statements that try to disprove teachability rely on indirect evidence and mixed understandings of what constitutes teaching, as well as disregard to the varied



nature of communication strategies, which means that some of them are likely to be more frequently used as a result of explicit teaching, whereas with others, that probability is smaller. His work also suggests that strategy training can be successful even when learners' language proficiency is not on a high level (his work was mainly concerned with students on a pre-intermediate level).

There is relatively little research that has been done regarding the teaching materials related to strategic competence, and the research that has been done is somewhat dated. For example, Tarone and Yule (1989: 114-115) stated that 'there are few, if any, materials available at present which teach learners how to use communication strategies when problems are encountered in the process of transmitting information', applying to both commercially produced coursebooks and materials found in journals. To overcome this deficit, materials regarding the teaching of strategic competence were published in journals targeted at English teachers (e.g. Dörnyei and Thurrell, 1991), consisting of activities designed to both raise awareness and develop the skill of using strategic competence. However, since strategic competence has had enough time since then to make its way into mainstream teaching materials, it is worth finding out what the situation is like today and whether coursebooks include this aspect of communicative and intercultural communication competence.

One could argue that in some cultures, many of the communication strategies listed by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell would not be helpful. As Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005: 172) explain, high and low context communication styles (originally proposed by Edward Hall) use very different verbal modes. In low-context communication, there is more straight talk and the sender takes responsibility for making sure they are understood. In high-context communication, communication tends to be much more indirect, there is more self-humbling talk and nonverbal aspects of communication are much more

important and carry more meaning. It is also receiver-oriented as they are responsible for decoding the message, including the contextual or hidden meanings incorporated in the communication. When the receiver of the message does not share the cultural values and communication style of the sender, there is a considerable chance that the message will remain unclear or it will be wrongly decoded. In a high-context communication situation, the sender might be confused or even offended if the receiver signals their confusion. As Müller (2003: 69) explains, 'in cultures applying indirect modes of communication in order to achieve discourse harmony, a shift to meta levels is considered to be potentially face-threatening and therefore taboo'. In this case, both parties would need to be taught about the intercultural differences that exist in the usage of different components of strategic competence. Nevertheless, if at least one of the interlocutors has received some training in communication strategies, they are more likely to find a way to solve the problems they have encountered.

In addition to the problem of some communication strategies being inappropriate in certain cultures, it can also be argued that it can be difficult to teach strategies that are disapproved of in the learners' L1. For example, circumlocution is often seen as vague and lacking conciseness, and using all-purpose words (e.g. '*thingy*') can be seen as evidence of lack of knowledge, or even education. Therefore, encouraging language learners to use these strategies may seem controversial. Dörnyei (1995: 80), however, convincingly points out that the availability of these strategies in L2 can provide confidence and security for learners, 'allowing them room to manoeuvre in times of difficulty', which can make the difference between giving up on trying to convey a message, and continuing the conversation using one or more communication strategy that strategic competence consists of.

Therefore, strategic competence and the communicative competencies that are part of it are relevant to any language learner who wishes to improve their communicative competence or intercultural communication competence. In the case of language learners who are studying in Estonian schools, developing these competences is also part of the curricula, so they should also have a place in the commercially produced language materials that are used.

### **English teaching materials**

As Kayapinar (2009: 69) explains, ready-made coursebooks are more popular in English language teaching (ELT) than ever before, offering both teachers and students the necessary means for language instruction and learning. Richards (2001) also emphasises the important role of such materials, stating that commercially produced coursebooks can often serve the role of the main source of input and practice for language learners, defining what kind of language is learned, which skills are concentrated on, and which topics are introduced to learners. In some cases, especially with experienced teachers, the coursebook may also be a supplementary material that is not strictly adhered to, but in general, materials such as these are widely used and inexperienced teachers are likely to use them thoroughly. Ian McGrath (2002: 8) proposes a list of possible metaphors regarding English coursebooks – he proposes the metaphors of a recipe, a holy book, a springboard, a compass, a straitjacket, a survival kit, a supermarket, and a crutch. These metaphors illustrate the many roles that coursebooks can have and offer a good insight into the different ways in which coursebooks are used, depending on the experience, goals, and preferred methods of teachers. As Richards (*ibid.*) points out, teachers who are only in the beginning of their career can use coursebooks and the way the content is sequenced there as the sole basis for their lesson plans, rendering the teacher's role to that of a technician,

only presenting the materials chosen and prepared by others. However, using coursebooks also has many benefits and Richards (ibid.) lists eight advantages that coursebooks typically have – they provide structure, help standardize instruction, well-developed materials ensure quality, provide a variety of resources, they are time-efficient compared to preparing materials oneself, provide correct input, can help with teacher training, and tend to be visually appealing. Richards also offers a list of potential drawbacks that may occur when using coursebooks, such as teaching inauthentic language and content, the coursebooks can be unsuitable to particular learners in terms of interests and learning styles, and commercially produced materials also tend to be rather expensive. Therefore, coursebooks have many positive attributes but one should also be aware of possible shortcomings. Whether they are the preferred choice of materials or merely additional material, commercially produced coursebooks should be thoroughly analysed due to their widespread use and popularity in order to better understand what kind of language and skills students are likely to come into contact with in the classroom. Whereas the representation of vocabulary activities, grammar presentation, the balance between reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills, and the role of illustrations has been researched, the presence and presentation of communication strategies has been overlooked.

Since strategic competence is mainly in use in oral communication, the logical placement of it in English coursebooks would be within the sections concerned with the skills of speaking and listening, but also vocabulary and lead-in and discussion activities to reading and writing. In a typical coursebook, the units of progression are topics (manifested in units or modules), and each unit has sections on the four skills (writing, reading, listening, and speaking), as well as grammar and vocabulary. Although not everything that is included in a coursebook actually gets taught and teachers are free to

bring in additional materials to class (or do extra activities that do not require any additional materials), including strategic competence in a coursebook would certainly increase the likeliness of it being taught and later used by students. Also, one cannot assume that all teachers are aware of or interested in the role and importance of strategic competence in communication, or teach it without even thinking about it. In addition, many coursebooks also allow for individual study (for this purpose, there are additional materials like multi-ROMs and online resources to help learners). Unless individual learners feel the need to get better acquainted with communication strategies, they are highly unlikely to learn about it unless these strategies are included in the syllabus and content of the coursebook.

In addition to the individual needs and interests of learners as well as those of teachers, language teaching materials have to correspond to the curriculum that they are used with. Unfortunately, the rather vague nature of the Estonian national curricula in use means that teachers can find little help when looking for guidelines regarding what to teach; this is where a more detailed curriculum would solve many problems. Today, the Estonian national curricula for basic schools (Vabariigi Valitsus, 2010) and gymnasium (Vabariigi Valitsus, 2011) broadly outline the different goals, including ones concerned with communicative competence and intercultural communication competence, without defining any general or specific objectives. Whereas both goals and objectives outline what students are expected to be able to do with the language once instruction finishes, goals are more general and vague, whereas objectives are more detailed (Eyring, 1998: 27) and allow teachers, as well as syllabus and coursebook designers, to take these instructions into account and design courses that ensure the attainment of these goals and objectives. The lack of clear objectives related to these competences, however, means that even when teachers turn to the curricula to get a better idea of what in particular they are expected to

teach, the notion and outcomes related to strategic competence are likely to remain hidden from them.

If coursebooks are found to lack material on strategic competence (the components of which are communication strategies that also form part of communicative competence and intercultural competence), additional material could be brought to class by the teacher or activities already included in the coursebook could be modified accordingly. For this to happen, however, teachers need to be aware of this particular shortcoming and willing to make an effort to include it in their classroom activities. Nation and Macalister (2009: 161) list six possible scenarios in which adapting the contents of a language coursebook should be considered – the coursebook does not include activities that the teacher has used before and knows to be successful; the content of the coursebook does not fit into the time available; the content is not age-appropriate or does not correspond to the interests and needs of the learners; there is a discrepancy between the content of the coursebook and the knowledge and skills of learners; the coursebook lacks language items, skills, ideas, discourse or strategies that the learners need; the principles that the teacher feels should be applied do not correspond to those used in the coursebook; and the coursebook does not give learners a say in the process of curriculum design. All of these reasons for materials' adaptation are valid. The lack of communication strategies would fit perfectly under the fifth reason for adapting a coursebook (lacking the linguistic features, strategies, and skills which learners need), but it would also apply to others – when strategic competence is not included in the materials, then it is unlikely that the coursebook includes all the aspects that the teacher feels should be incorporated, or that all the relevant principles that the teacher supports are included. In addition, it would be improbable that a coursebook lacking in communication strategies fitted the needs of learners as it is an important part of

developing intercultural communication competence as well as communicative competence.

The easiest way for the teacher to adapt a coursebook is to modify existing activities so that they include the use of strategic competence. For example, an activity in which students are asked to compose a dialogue about using public transport could be modified so that one of the speakers wants to talk about using the subway, but cannot remember the word and has to use circumlocution, whereas the other speaker can only remember the French word for 'airplane' and uses code-switching (although students would need to be taught about these strategies beforehand). However, modifying activities may be problematic as Grant (1990: 38) points out that many coursebooks lack genuine communicative activities. Modifying activities that are very far from the kind of activities that would render themselves to change to incorporate strategic competence would be rather difficult and it would be easier to compose new activities altogether. If a coursebook has aspects of strategic competence implicitly included (for example, some fillers used in a listening activity), the teacher could draw students' attention to the strategy, its function, and how to use it in future communication. This discussion could be followed by an activity in which students are asked to make their own sentences or dialogues in which the strategy is used. Although making one's own activities, even when only modifying an existing activity, can be time-consuming, it could be very beneficial for the students. The teacher could include not only written text and audio material but also video; in that case, non-verbal communication could also be recorded and analysed in class. Composing suitable speaking activities without the support of the coursebook would also be possible, although again, it would demand more time and effort from the teacher.

Therefore, as noticing a shortcoming such as the lack of strategic competence could be difficult, especially for less experienced teachers, and modifying coursebook activities

or compiling new material is often time-consuming and needs thorough preparation, it would be beneficial for both teachers and students if explicit explanation of strategic competence, as well as the implicit inclusion of the relevant communication strategies, were included in commercially published EFL/ESL coursebooks and the accompanying teaching materials (i.e. the teacher's book, workbook, audio materials, online activities, etc).



## MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

In order to see if the communicative strategies that form strategic competence are included in EFL/ESL materials, whether they are explicitly introduced to learners, and which methods are used to teach strategic competence, three sets of materials are analysed – the student's book, teacher's book and audio materials of *Upstream Intermediate B2* (Evans and Dooley 2002), *Premium B1* (Roberts 2008), and *Solutions Intermediate* (Falla and Davies 2008). The materials selected have been compiled by different authors and distributed by different publishers, Express Publishing, Pearson Longman, and Oxford University Press, respectively, ensuring that attention to strategic competence (or lack of it) is not the personal preference of an author or publisher. In addition, the language levels of learners the materials are intended for have been taken into consideration – the materials selected are for B1 and B2 learners. In the context of the Estonian education system, ESL learners at the B1 level are likely to be 14-16 years old, with learners at the B2 level likely to be 16-18 years old. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (Council of Europe 2001: 26-27), B1 learners are expected to understand everyday conversations, even with native speakers, occasionally asking for the other participant to repeat what was said, whereas B2 learners should also understand the participants' attitudes and be able to interact with more fluency and less time for preparing what is intended to convey. Therefore, levels B1 and B2 are suitable for learning strategic competence, as learners are expected to be able to use that skill.

The materials in *Premium B1* consist of 15 units, each dealing with a different topic. After every 5 units, there is a section of progress check for revision. The syllabus of the materials' set outlines the content in terms of vocabulary, grammar, reading, speaking,

listening, writing, and learning tips. In addition, a functions section is also part of the materials. In the teacher's book, there are also teaching tips and extra activities, which will be analysed.

The materials in *Upstream Intermediate* consist of 5 modules, each containing two units, while each unit has its own topic and lead-in. At the end of each module, there is a section for self-assessment. The syllabus of *Upstream Intermediate* details the contents in terms of topics, vocabulary, reading, grammar, listening, speaking, and writing. The material also has a communication section, follow-up activities in the reading section, and learning tips.

The materials in *Solutions Intermediate* consist of 10 units, each of which discusses a different topic. After every 2 units, there are language and skill revision sections. In addition, there are 5 sections throughout the materials for exam preparation, consisting of different types of activities. The syllabus divides the contents of the materials into sections of vocabulary and listening, grammar, culture, reading, everyday English, and writing. There are also tips segments in most units. The teacher's book offers extra activities as well as suggestions and additional explanations to offer to students.

Since strategic competence is manifested as a response and mainly in conversation, one could expect to find instances of it in the listening and speaking sections of EFL/ESL materials, as well as lead-ins and discussions of reading texts and writing activities, whereas some strategies (e.g. fillers and circumlocution) could also be part of the vocabulary sections. Therefore, all three sets of materials have the relevant sections which could be expected to include communicative strategies that form strategic competence – these sections will be analysed in all three sets of materials (in all three cases, the student's books and teacher's books will be studied, as well as audio materials). In the case of *Premium B1*, the sections of learning tips and functions will also be checked for instances

of strategic competence, as well as the introductory section of each unit as it includes speaking activities. The lead-in sections of *Upstream Intermediate* will also be analysed, as well as the communication section. In *Solutions Intermediate*, the speaking section, which will be analysed along with others, is called 'everyday English', the culture section will also be included in the analysis as it includes different types of activities, and the vocabulary builder section and boxes with learning tips will also be analysed.

The instances of components of strategic competences will be counted, noting where it occurs, whether it is explicitly explained or simply part of the text, and how it is explained (if at all). With the audio recordings, the tapes will be listened to; in addition, the transcripts will also be looked at to make sure that no use of a strategy is missed.

The audio materials are viewed as part of the student's book; therefore, if any component of strategic competence appears in both, within the context of the same activity and sentence, it shall be counted once. For example, if students are expected to listen for a particular hesitation device and fill in the gaps, the device will be counted as one instance of a component of strategic competence that appears in the student's book. If the same communication strategy included in both the student's book and the teacher's book within the same activity and sentence, then it will be counted as occurring in the student's book.

The list of components (36 altogether) of strategic competence by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995: 28) will be taken as the basis for the analysis, with the occurrence of the features listed taken as indicators of the inclusion of strategic competence in the EFL/ESL materials. These components include avoidance or reduction strategies (*message replacement, topic avoidance, message abandonment*), achievement or compensatory strategies (*circumlocution, approximation, all-purpose words, non-linguistic means, restructuring, word-coinage, literal translation from L1, foreignising, code switching to L1 or L3, retrieval*), stalling or time-gaining strategies (*fillers, hesitation*

*devices and gambits, self and other-repetition*), self-monitoring strategies (*self-initiated repair, self-rephrasing or over-elaborating*), interactional strategies (*direct and indirect appeals for help, repetition requests, clarification requests, confirmation requests, verbal and non-verbal expressions of non-understanding, interpretive summary*), responding to an indication of a problem (with *repetition, rephrasing, expansion, reduction, confirmation, rejection, repair*), *checking whether the interlocutor can follow you, is listening, can hear, or what you said was correct or grammatical*). However, there are some components that shall not be observed in the analysis of audio materials, namely message replacement, topic avoidance, non-linguistic compensatory strategies (e.g. drawing pictures) and non-verbal expressions of non-understanding, because the use of these strategies cannot be verified via listening without knowing the speaker's original intent or having video evidence of non-linguistic means being used. These components can, however, be elaborated on in the student's or teacher's book, and will therefore be included in the analysis of these sources.

Once all the materials have been looked through and the components of strategic competence noted, the results will be analysed – first, each set of materials will receive individual attention, and then they shall be compared. A table will be drawn for each set of materials, indicating which communicative strategies were represented, where they could be found, and how frequently they occurred. In order to see how these communicative strategies are taught, the teaching framework of Celce-Murcia et al (1995: 29) will be used – they have listed six ways in which to teach strategic competence, and the results of the analysis will be compared to this list.

The findings of the analysis will indicate whether the suggested components of strategic competence are part of these ESL/EFL materials, whether the elements of strategic competence are explicitly taught, and which methods are employed to teach it. As

a result of these findings, some generalisations can be made about the inclusion of strategic competence in ESL/EFL materials, which leads to tentative conclusions as to whether there needs to be a change in materials production and if teachers should bring additional materials to class.

## RESULTS

### *Premium B1*

**Table 1. Components of strategic competence in *Premium B1***

Components of strategic competence	Student's book	Teacher's book	Audio materials
Fillers	2	4	57
Circumlocution	16	23	
Expansion			3
Self-initiated repair			2
Interpretive summary	1		1
Repetition request	1		1
Confirmation request			1
Direct appeal for help			1
Verbal expression of non-understanding			1
Message abandonment			1
Code-switching			1
Repair			1
Repetition			1
Confirmation			1
<b>Total</b>	20	27	72
<b>Total</b>	119		

#### **Student's book**

As seen in Table 1, the most commonly used component of strategic competence in the *Premium B1* student's book is circumlocution. It has been used in 16 cases, especially in the vocabulary sections, where students are asked to match words with their meanings or explain the meaning of a word or a phrase. However, in most of these cases, there is no

mention of using these descriptions or explanations in communicative situations or to solve breakdowns in communication.

Explicit attention has been paid to strategic competence in two instances. Circumlocution is explained in the vocabulary section where students are asked to guess what has been described, and then try and explain some sports equipment to their partner without using the actual words (page 60). A filler/gambit (*'as I was saying'*), repetition request (*'sorry, could you say that again?'*), and interpretive summary (*'so what you're saying is'*) are explained in a functions section, titled 'managing a conversation' (page 114). Students are asked to match the phrases with their functions and practise the intonation of these phrases, but not use the phrases in communication.

There is also one activity where students are asked to play a charades-like game, having to explain a word to their team; although it constitutes vocabulary revision, there is communicative intent, not just explaining a word's definition as in most cases in the coursebook.

Fillers, hesitation devices and gambits are also present in the form of a filler/hesitation device (*'apparently'*) in the speaking section, under the title of 'useful language', which students are encouraged to use, but there is no explanation as to when, how, or why learners should use it. There is, however, a task in which students are expected to answer questions, in which the words could be used.

### **Teacher's book**

The teacher's book has one instance of explicit attention to circumlocution, encouraging the teacher to explain the use of paraphrasing (page 73) (although most of the explanation can also be found in the student's book). Although there are many extra

activities in the teacher's book that are not included in the student's book, none of these explicitly develop strategic competence.

Circumlocution is included in 22 instances altogether, with the teacher encouraged to ask for word meanings or instruct learners to match words with their definitions. However, this strategy is not used in communicative situations.

Fillers, hesitation devices and gambits are also represented in four cases (in extra activities for the teacher to use), with one instance of '*if you ask me*' and three uses of '*well*'. In all of these instances, students are encouraged to use these, but there is no additional information.

### **Audio materials**

As seen in Table 1, the audio recordings were the most prolific source of components of strategic competence in the *Premium B1* materials analysed. The most common example of strategic competence in use in the 53 audio recordings in these materials is the use of '*well*' as a filler and time-gaining strategy, having been used a total of 52 times. In most of these cases, it occurs in interviews at the beginning of a speaker's turn. Other fillers and hesitation devices in use are '*you know*' and '*ah*', both being used twice, and '*er*', used once.

Two cases of self-initiated repair could be found in these audio materials, signalled by the use of '*I mean*'. Here, several interactional strategies are also used – an interpretive summary ('*so what you're saying is*'), a direct appeal for help ('*what does 'guess' mean?*'), a verbal expression of non-understanding ('*sorry, I don't follow*'), a confirmation request ('*...is that right?*'), as well as a repetition request ('*sorry, could you say that again*').



In addition, there are two instances of code-switching to explain specific words (one word is translated into Spanish, the other into Greek). There is also an instance of message abandonment when the speaker realises that they are wrong about the content of the started utterance.

Since there are several indicators of non-understanding by one interlocutor, corresponding suitable responses by their communication partner can also be found as they acknowledge that a problem has occurred and try to resolve it – there is a repair, a confirmation, a repetition, and three expansions of the original message.

### ***Upstream Intermediate***

**Table 2. Components of strategic competence in *Upstream Intermediate***

<b>Components of strategic competence</b>	<b>Student's book</b>	<b>Teacher's book</b>	<b>Audio materials</b>
Fillers	17	34	122
Circumlocution	20	14	
Clarification request			5
Expansion			5
Self-initiated repair			4
Non-linguistic means	3	1	
Interpretive summary			3
Repetition request	2		
Confirmation request	2		
Confirmation			2
Self-rephrasing	1		
Direct appeal for help	1		
Verbal expression of non-understanding	1		
<b>Total</b>	47	49	141
<b>Total</b>	237		

### **Student's book**

As Table 2 shows, this set of materials includes a high number of components of strategic competence, both in terms of the number of different strategies and their frequency of use.

Components of strategic competence have been explicitly drawn attention to and explained to learners in 3 instances. First, a non-linguistic achievement strategy is explained to students (page 23) – 12 emoticons are presented, along with an explanation of where and how they can be used, and students are asked to use them to reply to some comments. Secondly, there is an activity called ‘showing hesitation’ (page 61), which introduces hesitation devices and fillers, namely ‘*let me see*’, ‘*erm*’, ‘*oh*’, ‘*well*’, and ‘*mmm*’. Students are asked to listen to a dialogue, recognise these components of strategic competence by underlining words that show hesitation, and practise them in short dialogues similar to the one that they heard. Thirdly, there is a section called ‘filler phrases in conversation’ (page 93). In addition to three fillers, the communicative strategies represented there also include two repetition requests, self-rephrasing, a verbal expression of non-understanding (*‘I’m not sure what you mean’*), and a direct appeal for help. Students are asked to listen to a conversation and match the expressions with their user. They are then given four situations in which communication had run into difficulty and asked to decide which of the aforementioned words and phrases would be appropriate to use.

Fillers, hesitation devices and gambits have also been shown to be used in communication without further explanation. ‘*Well*’ is used in four instances, ‘*oh*’ appears three times, with ‘*hmm*’ and ‘*let me see*’ both appearing once. Similarly, confirmation

requests in the form of *'isn't that right'* and *'oh really'* have been included without additional explanation.

Students have been asked to use non-linguistic strategies on two separate occasions; although students are shown that it is possible to explain something using non-verbal means, they are not encouraged to do so in communicative situations as a means of compensating for lack of verbal skills. In the first instance, students are asked to play a game in which they have to draw so that others could guess which phrasal verb they are thinking of. Similarly, they are also asked to play charades to explain the title of a film or television programme.

In a similar manner, students are shown that circumlocution can be used to explain a word or a concept in other words, but this behaviour has not been presented as a communicative strategy, but merely as a way of learning vocabulary. This is the case in 20 instances.

### **Teacher's book**

As there are fewer extra activities in this teacher's book than there are in that of *Premium BI*, there are no additional instances of explicit attention being paid to strategic competence in this teacher's book. The instances of the strategies that make up strategic competence are mainly included in a section called 'suggested answers key', which mainly serves to purpose of showing the teacher what to expect as answers, although the teacher might potentially read out a part of it as an example (e.g. an example of a dialogue that students are expected to write).

As Table 2 indicates, the teacher's book has included a relatively large number of fillers and hesitation devices – 34 altogether. *'Well'* is used 22 times, *'oh'* 5 times, *'mmm'* and *'erm'* both twice, *'er'*, *'let me see'* and *'ah'* once. However, most of these occur in the

section called ‘suggested answers key’, which seems to be for the teacher’s personal use, and not necessarily to be read out to students.

Teachers are asked to encourage students to explain a word or a phrase in other words in 14 cases, but circumlocution is not shown to be in use in communicative situations.

Similarly, there is one case in which there is an extra activity in which students are asked to use non-linguistic means to explain vocabulary items, but the rest of the class is expected to simply guess the words and phrases, not use this strategy as part of a larger communicative act.

### **Audio materials**

As Table 2 shows, the audio recordings of Upstream Intermediate offer a high frequency of the use of fillers. The most common filler and hesitation device that is part of strategic competence in these 71 audio recordings is the use of ‘*well*’, occurring 67 times. ‘*Oh*’ is another common filler, occurring 18 times, followed by ‘*hmm*’ and ‘*um*’ (five occurrences both), ‘*ah*’, ‘*right*’, ‘*yes*’, ‘*you know*’ (four occurrences each), ‘*er*’ (used three times), ‘*mmm*’, ‘*okay*’ and ‘*let me see*’ (each used twice), as well as single instances of the use of ‘*uh*’ and ‘*erm*’.

In terms of interactional strategies, clarification requests have been used the most (five times), with interpretive summaries also used (three times). As a response to these, expansions occur five times and confirmations twice.

Self-initiated repair has been included with the use of ‘*I mean*’ in four cases.

## ***Solutions Intermediate***

**Table 3. Components of strategic competence in *Solutions Intermediate***

<b>Components of strategic competence</b>	<b>Student's book</b>	<b>Teacher's book</b>	<b>Audio materials</b>
Fillers	9		116
Circumlocution	23	18	
Self-initiated repair			4
Non-linguistic means		1	
Code-switching		1	
Approximation	1		
Other-repetition			1
Confirmation request			1
Clarification request			1
Repetition			1
<b>Total</b>	33	20	124
<b>Total</b>	177		

### **Student's book**

As Table 3 indicates, *Solutions Intermediate* incorporates the smallest number of different components of strategic competence, including ten different communication strategies, although the number of uses of these strategies is relatively high (elements of strategic competence have been included in 177 instances).

There is one instance of explicit attention to an element of strategic competence when circumlocution is explained in one of the 'speaking tip' segments (page 4) of the student's book, in which students are encouraged to use circumlocution when they cannot find the exact words to describe something. In the accompanying activity, students are asked to describe the clothing and appearance of four people, using a mixture of exact

vocabulary and longer explanations using circumlocution (e.g. ‘*it’s a kind of*, ‘*it’s sort of* + adjective’).

In addition to the activity in which circumlocution is explicitly drawn attention to, it is also in use in 22 other activities in which students are asked to explain the meaning of certain words or phrases, although this is not in a communicative situation but rather serves the purpose of vocabulary-learning.

The use of hesitation devices and fillers has also been noted, the most common of which are ‘*oh*’ and ‘*well*’, both represented four times. There is also one instance of ‘*mmm*’ being used.

Approximation, a compensatory strategy, has also been used once when ‘*least quickly*’ is used.

### **Teacher’s book**

The teacher’s book includes one instance of an explicit explanation of circumlocution used in communicative situations (page 66). In this activity, the teacher is instructed to discuss the language that can be used to describe things that are unclear, and students are asked to describe what they see in the pictures given (the activity is very similar to the explicit explanation of circumlocution in the student’s book, although they are several units apart).

Circumlocution is furthermore included in 17 cases, in which the teacher is asked to elicit explanations and definitions from students, usually in vocabulary-building activities.

Code-switching has also been included – the teacher is instructed to explain the meaning of homophones to students using the Greek etymology of the word, thus code-switching to L3.

In addition, a non-linguistic achievement strategy has been included, although once again, not in a context in which it would be used to overcome difficulties in communication. Instead, the teacher is asked to instruct students to show either a thumbs up or thumbs down gesture to indicate their opinion of whether a person included in a dialogue has been successful in a job interview. However, showing students that gestures are part of communication has the potential of enhancing their ability to use the same gestures as part of strategic competence when they encounter problems in communication, and is therefore noteworthy.

### **Audio materials**

As Table 3 shows, the component of strategic competence that is most common in the 79 audio recordings of *Solutions Intermediate* is the use of fillers. The most commonly used filler in these materials is ‘*well*’, used 44 times altogether, followed by the use of ‘*oh*’ with 27 occurrences. ‘*So*’ is also rather common, having been used in ten instances, and ‘*hmm*’ occurs nine times. Other fillers that have been included here are ‘*er*’ (used six times), ‘*umm*’, ‘*mmm*’ and ‘*you know*’ (all three have been used four times), ‘*ahh*’ and ‘*I see*’ (used three times). ‘*Yes*’ and ‘*right*’ are both also used as time-gaining strategies, having been used once.

In addition to the abovementioned fillers, the stalling or time-gaining strategy of other-repetition has also been used in one case.

Furthermore, there are four cases in which a self-initiated repair takes place with the use of ‘*I mean*’.

Requests that are used to indicate non-understanding have also been used – both a confirmation request and a clarification request have been presented in the recordings. As a

response, repetition has been included as an interactional strategy to keep the conversation going.



## DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis of the student's book, teacher's book, and audio materials of *Premium B1*, *Upstream Intermediate*, and *Solutions Intermediate* indicate that although some communicative strategies that form strategic competence are represented in EFL/ESL materials, they are largely only implicitly included and the methods in use are insufficient to warrant thorough instruction and learning.

A relatively small proportion of components of strategic competence have been included in these materials – circumlocution and fillers are the ones that have been used the most, with some instances of self-initiated repairs, indicators of non-understanding such as clarification and confirmation requests, and interpretive summaries, as well as a very limited amount of instances of code switching, non-linguistic means and direct appeals for help. Out of the 34 observable components of strategic competence outlined by Celce-Murcia et al (1995: 28), 18 have not been explicitly or implicitly included in the materials – this is exactly 50% of the possible number of communication strategies that could have been included. This implies that although one could argue that strategic competence is included, it is not thoroughly represented.

Moreover, there are only eight instances in which elements of strategic competence have been explicitly explained. *Upstream Intermediate* proves to have the most material on strategic competence with three explicit instructions in the student's book. The student's book of *Premium B1* includes two explanations of communicative strategies, with one of them elaborated on in the teacher's book. *Solutions Intermediate* offers two explicit explanations of circumlocution (one in the student's book, another in the teacher's book). Based on these three sets of materials, it could be argued that there are not many explicit explanations regarding the nature and utility of communication strategies that are part of

strategic competence. Furthermore, the strategies that are discussed are mainly the same, namely circumlocution and hesitation devices. On the one hand, this significantly limits the amount of information that students are going to get; on the other hand, the repetition of this information in different parts of the course means that these communication strategies get recycled and therefore will become that much more accessible for students in communicative situations in which these strategies can be used. However, even the implicit inclusion of communication strategies is likely to support learners in using these strategies and even when a strategy is shown not in a communicative situation but in isolation (e.g. the use of circumlocution to explain new vocabulary), it nevertheless enhances the likelihood of learners using the strategy in the future.

The choice of components of strategic competence that have been included in these EFL/ESL materials shows that the authors have chosen the areas that are the easiest to explain or can be used without any explanation at all (such as fillers and circumlocution). Explaining the possible positive outcomes of using a strategy like message abandonment and showing that the use of it can even enhance communication would require more time effort. However, it could be highly reassuring for students to be reminded of the fact that communication in a foreign language does not have to be perfect and modelled on situations in which everything always goes to plan – this could avoid a sense of failure students can feel when the communicative situations they are in turn out to be problematic due to any number of reasons.

As discussed before, only hesitation devices, fillers, circumlocution, one instance of an interpretive summary, one repetition request, and one instance of non-linguistic means to express themselves have been explicitly explained to students, and even then, it has been done briefly and not allowing for much practice. To make the most of these activities, teachers would need to recognise the need for increasing the extent of both explicit

instruction and practise opportunities for students to be able to put their knowledge into use and thus making it easier for them to retrieve this knowledge and skill when they need it in a communicative situation. Nevertheless, the fact that at least these few aspects of strategic competence have been explicitly drawn attention to at all is a sign of improvement. In 1989, Tarone and Yule (114-115) argued that there were almost no materials to instruct the learner about what to do when communication runs into difficulty. Today, all of the three sets of materials (published in 2002 and 2008) include at least some explicit material regarding this issue. In addition, a larger number of strategies were shown to be implicitly present – although students or teachers might not pay explicit attention to these strategies, there is still a chance that they will notice them and make note of their use on a subconscious level, at least. Although researchers such as Wood (2010: 52) argue that strategic competence instruction should be explicit to warrant the best results, even the implicit inclusion of it in EFL/ESL materials means that materials production has taken a step in the right direction. Also, the teachers who feel the need to turn their students' attention to strategic competence have at least something to work with – modifying tasks that have at least some communicative strategies that form strategic competence already included so that these strategies could be more explicitly discussed and practised should not be exceedingly difficult, at least not when compared to a situation where materials would include no such strategies whatsoever.

Justifiably, most instances of strategic competence were included in the audio sections in the case of all three sets of materials. Spoken interaction is also where most of the relevant communicative competencies are used in real communicative situations, so although the audio materials were not authentic in any of these materials, they at least are not all perfect examples of communicative acts and the people involved have to use at least some strategies to keep the conversation going once they encounter problems.

In the rare cases in which strategic competence is explicitly drawn attention to, the activities are placed in different parts of the coursebooks, allowing for at least some recycling of the use of these notions. In *Premium B1*, strategic competence was explicitly taught on pages 60 and 114, whereas in *Upstream Intermediate* it was taught on pages 23, 61 and 93, although in *Solutions Intermediate* there was only one instance of explicit instruction in the student's book. Placing strategic competence in different units or modules of the coursebook makes it more likely that at least some of these activities are discussed in class – had they been in one section, they might have all occurred at a time where the teacher and students are in a rush to finish a unit or topic and might get overlooked as non-essential elements in language learning. Being placed in different parts of the coursebook, however, makes it likely that at least one of the activities will be introduced to the students, even if it is done in a rush (for example, when the teacher needs something to fill the last few minutes of the lesson). In an ideal situation, the strategies are discussed and practised in all cases, which allows for revision and thus being able to recall the use of these strategies in future communicative situations.

Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995: 29) elaborate on what kind of methods could be used in teaching strategic competence – their list is composed of six different components of such instruction, including making students aware of communicative strategies and their use, presenting L2 examples of the strategies in use, explicitly providing learners with these specific linguistic devices, giving students sufficient opportunities to practice this aspect of communication, elaborating on how the use of these strategies differs from one culture to another, and encouraging risk-taking in using them. In the case of *Premium B1*, *Upstream Intermediate*, and *Solutions Intermediate*, only the first three methods can be seen to be in use. In the rare cases of explicit instruction, students can be said to have been made aware of some elements of strategic competence. Examples of

different strategies in use in English-language communication can also be seen, especially in the audio recordings, which proved to include the largest number of communicative strategies. A small number of these linguistic devices (e.g. fillers) were explicitly taught as students were expected to learn the meanings and functions of some words and phrases, and students were offered some opportunities to practice (although it seems that the amount of practice opportunities is insufficient in most cases).

However, the materials were found to be lacking in explanations regarding how these strategies are used in different cultures and what to keep in mind when using them. Also, students were not encouraged to use them outside the controlled activities offered in the coursebooks – they were asked to act out a dialogue that was identical in structure to the one they were presented with, and to choose some sports-related words from the 11 offered to use circumlocution to explain their meaning, but not use these strategies in situations that would be relevant to them and which would relate to their communicative intent. As students were not encouraged to use these strategies in communicative situations outside the classroom, this can be seen as a severe shortcoming. Unless students make the connection between a language device and its usefulness in real-life communication, their ability to use it will probably not be enhanced unless they are encouraged to take risks. Similarly, students are offered very few opportunities to practise using these strategies – although some controlled practise is evident, this is not enough to make these strategies readily available in communicative situations outside the classroom.

The instances in which the relevant communicative strategies were evident, but only implicitly included, can be seen as potentially enhancing strategic competence, but not as an instance of teaching strategic competence. Therefore, although strategic competence can be seen as part of these materials, there are several shortcomings when it comes to the methods employed.

The findings of this research imply that strategic competence is part of EFL/ESL language materials, but they could be made much more explicit. At present, the task of modifying the existing activities so that examples of strategic competence would be more explicit falls on the teacher. Modifying or coming up with new activities altogether, however, is a time-consuming task, and not many teachers would probably be willing to do it, especially since up until now, strategic competence has not received a lot of attention. It would seem that it would be easier for both teachers and students if there was a change in materials production so that there would be more explicit instruction of communicative strategies that strategic competence consists of.

Ideally, materials would include not only awareness-raising overviews of these strategies or implicitly occurring instances of them in use, or even stating the relevant vocabulary items and linguistic devices, but also how these strategies are used in different cultures. Also, students need more opportunities to practise the use of these strategies so that awareness would be able to develop into a concrete skill that could be used in real communicative situations. The final element of strategic competence instruction that would benefit from a change is encouraging students to take risks in communication and use these strategies without feeling like they have failed as foreign language speakers. There seems to be too much emphasis on becoming a perfect speaker of English and too little explanation of how often breakdowns can occur in normal communication.

Thus, it would seem that materials production has become more comprehensive when it comes to communicative competence and intercultural communication competence, but there are still many shortcomings that should be addressed to ensure that students get the most out of the materials that are used by their teacher or by themselves with the aim of learning how to communicate in a foreign language.

It is noteworthy, however, that the three sets of materials have a very different frequency of components of strategic competence included – whereas *Premium BI* has 119 representations of these communication strategies, *Upstream Intermediate* has almost exactly double the amount – 237. Meanwhile, *Solutions Intermediate* has 177 instances of these strategies. This indicates that the representation that components of strategic competence get in a set of materials is highly dependent on the particular materials. Therefore, although this research gives a tentative insight into the situation of strategic competence in EFL/ESL materials, it is by no means a finite account of the situation.

However, even though there are a number of shortcomings in the EFL/ESL materials analysed and only three sets of materials have been analysed as part of this research, there seems to be enough content related to strategic competence to at least raise awareness, although with only certain elements of strategic competence made available to teachers and students, it is likely that the two major competencies that strategic competence is part of – communicative competence and intercultural communication competence – will also be more difficult for the students to acquire and thoroughly master. If students are unable to master these competencies then it could be argued that they are also not achieving the goals that the Estonian national curricula have set, which surely indicates that there needs to be a shift in how EFL/ESL materials are composed.

## CONCLUSION

Communicative competence, which is the ability of a language user to use a language correctly and appropriately, relying on their knowledge and skills, forms a large part of what we consider to be successful communication. The same can also be said about intercultural communication competence, which comes into play when at least one of the interlocutors is from a different cultural or linguistic background – in this case, a number of skills, competences, and personality traits need to be combined in order to overcome potential problems. In the context of teaching and learning English in the Estonian educational context, they also have in common the fact that both are set as goals by the Estonian national curricula.

Communicative competence and intercultural communication competence are interrelated in that strategic competence (and the communication strategies it is composed of) forms part of both of them. Strategic competence is composed of a number of different communication strategies which can be used in order to overcome breakdowns in communication, whether the problems are caused by insufficient linguistic competence or cultural knowledge.

As strategic competence forms part of two important competences and is thus also one of the goals of language learning set out in the national curricula, it should also be part of EFL/ESL materials. The importance of coursebooks cannot be overlooked when discussing what is taught in language lessons – as Richards (2001) states, commercially produced coursebooks can often be the main source of input for learners, defining the linguistic features, skills, and topics that are covered as part of the lessons. Although activities found in these materials can be altered to suit the needs and interests of particular learners and can be made to include more aspects of strategic competence or make the



existing strategies more explicit, it is a time-consuming effort, and demands the teacher to recognise the lack of communication strategies. However, the role of strategic competence in language teaching and learning materials has not been thoroughly studied and thus deserves further attention.

To see if strategic competence is represented in commercially produced EFL/ESL materials, whether attention is explicitly drawn to it, and which methods are used to develop it, three sets of materials have been analysed – the student's book, teacher's book, and audio materials of *Premium B1*, *Upstream Intermediate*, and *Solutions Intermediate*. The materials have been chosen so that the authors and publishers are different, and the language level of learners (B1 and B2) is appropriate in that according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2001), these are the levels on which learners are expected to be able to use the relevant communication strategies. The list of suggested components of strategic competence developed by Celce-Murcia et al (1995:28) has been used to see which elements are included in the materials.

Results show that 50% of the components are included in the materials, showing that strategic competence is taught as part of conventional language instruction. However, analysis shows that there are relatively few cases of explicit instruction, with components of strategic competence explained in only eight instances throughout all three sets of materials.

In terms of the methods that have been used to teach strategic competence, only three out of the six available have been sufficiently utilised. The materials raise students' awareness of these strategies, present them with L2 examples of these strategies in use, provide specific linguistic devices and offer some opportunities to put this knowledge into practice, but the practice sections should be more extensive, students should be encouraged to use the strategies and take more risks, and the use of communication strategies in

different cultures should be explained in order to offer students sufficient opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills.

As the development of strategic competence is also connected to developing communicative competence and intercultural communication competence, it would appear that there needs to be a shift in materials' production to offer more opportunities for students to learn about communication strategies – with sufficient practice, this knowledge could be turned into a skill, and that would make it possible for the student to not only cope with breakdowns in communication, but also master the two larger competences.

As only three sets of materials were analysed, the results of this study can only be generalised to an extent. Although they give a tentative understanding of what the role of strategic competence in commercially produced EFL/ESL materials could be like at present time, future research into the topic could include a larger number of materials to be analysed, not only by different publishers and authors, but also with a different target level and audience. In addition, as only the student's books, teacher's books, and audio recordings were looked at in this research, there is work to be done regarding the analysis of workbooks, online materials, and the MultiROM materials that are often included in the sets of materials.

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## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

INGLISE FILOLOOGIA OSAKOND

**Laura Abroi**

**Suhtluspädevuse ja kultuuridevahelise kommunikatsiooni kompetentsuse arendamine: strateegiline kompetentsus EFL/ESL materjalides (Developing Communicative Competence and Intercultural Communication Competence: Strategic Competence in EFL/ESL Materials)**

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Annotatsioon:

Magistritöö eesmärgiks on uurida, kas strateegiline kompetentsus esineb EFL/ESL materjalides, kas sellele on eksplitsiitselt tähelepanu tõmmatud ning milliseid meetodeid on kasutatud selle õpetamiseks. Töö annab ülevaate suhtluspädevusest ja kultuuridevahelise kommunikatsiooni kompetentsusest, strateegiliselt kompetentsusest nende osana ning õppematerjalide rollist. Seejärel tutvustatakse metoodikat, uurimustulemusi ning nende tähendust.

Kuna strateegiline kompetentsus on nii suhtluspädevuse kui kultuuridevahelise kommunikatsiooni kompetentsuse osa ning need mõlemad on riiklike õppekavade poolt sätestatud kui kujundatavad üldpädevused, siis on oluline teada, kas see on kasutatavates materjalides esindatud. Töö käigus uuriti kolme materjalikomplekti – Premium B1, Upstream Intermediate ja Solutions Intermediate, analüüsides õpikuid, õpetajate raamatuid ja kuulamismaterjale, võttes aluseks strateegilise kompetentsuse komponendid, mis on välja toodud Celce-Murcia et al (1995: 28) poolt.

Uurimise käigus selgus, et kommunikatiivsed strateegiad, mis on strateegilise kompetentsuse osadeks, on materjalides küll esindatud, aga eksplitsiitselt vaid vähestel juhtudel. Lisaks selgus, et kasutatud on vaid piiratud kogusel õpetamise meetodeid.

Selle tulemusena võib väita, et kuigi strateegilise kompetentsuse osad on EFL/ESL materjalides esindatud, ei piisa sellest, et õpilased strateegilist kompetentsust omandada suudaks, ning seetõttu on tõenäoliselt raskendatud ka suhtluspädevuse ja kultuuridevahelise kommunikatsiooni kompetentsuse omandamine.

Märksõnad:

kultuuridevaheline kommunikatsioon, strateegiline kompetentsus, suhtluspädevus.

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 Developing Communicative Competence and Intercultural Communication Competence:  
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