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## **Communication Strategies in Translation: A Review on the Taxonomies from 1977 to 2011**

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*In this article, the writer intends to review taxonomies of communication strategies (CSs) offered by scholars of the field of translation and language teaching and she also produces her new model. This article is along with her first article published on the usage of CSs in translation which is entitled "communication strategies do work". She also wants to address students and instructors of translation studies and translators to be aware that these strategies are not solely applicable in language teaching and learning, communication process when they were first introduced but they are also workable in translation as a communication process.*

*Keywords: communication strategies, translation, language teaching, students and instructors of translation.*

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### **1 Introduction**

CSs are those strategies that a language user or translator makes use of whenever she/he feels some deficiencies in vocabulary and grammar leading to partial or complete misunderstanding or interruption in communication. In this article we take translation as a communication act that all the conditions attached to speaking as a communication act exist for translation as well.

The taxonomies offered by various researchers seem to vary on the surface but they all say the same thing. Over the years, there have been about nine key taxonomies of CSs emerged from 33 types of CSs, seven of which will be presented in the next parts and at last the writer proposes her model.

The taxonomies are: Tarone's (1977), Faerch and Kasper's (1983), the Nijmegen Group's (based on Poulisse, 1987; Kellerman, 1991), Bialystok's (1990), Dörnyei's (1995), Dörnyei and Scott's (1997), Rabab'ah's (2001) and finally Farrahi Avval's (2011).

#### *2-1 Tarone's taxonomy*

From an interactional view or social strategies, Tarone (1977) provides five main categories of CSs: paraphrase, borrowing, appeal for assistance, mime and avoidance.

The taxonomy and examples of CSs proposed by Tarone (1977, 1983) are demonstrated in Table 2-1.

With paraphrase, the learner uses these strategies to compensate for an L2 word that is

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Table 2- 1 Tarone's taxonomy of conscious CSs (as in Kongsom, 2009)

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1. Avoidance
    - a Topic avoidance
    - b Message abandonment
  2. Paraphrase
    - a Approximation
    - b Word coinage
    - c Circumlocution
  3. Conscious transfer
    - a Literal translation
    - b Language switch
  4. Appeal for assistance
  5. Mime
- 

not known by three subcategories: approximation, word coinage and circumlocution.

According to Tarone (1980), approximation occurs when the learner uses “a single target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the speaker.” Word coinage is employed when “the learner makes up a new word in order to communicate a desired concept.” For circumlocution, “the learner describes the characteristics or elements of the object or an action instead of using the appropriate target language structure” (Tarone, 1980).

Borrowing involves literal translation and language switch. For literal translation, the learner translates word for word from the native language. With language switch, the learner uses the native language term without bothering to translate. In appeal for assistance, the learner asks for the correct term or structure. The next strategy is mime which occurs when the learner uses nonverbal strategies in place of a meaning structure. In avoidance strategies, the learner avoids the communication by using topic avoidance or message abandonment. Topic avoidance occurs “when the learner simply does not talk about concepts for which the vocabulary or other meaning structure is not known” while

message abandonment occurs “when the learner begins to talk about a concept but is unable to continue due to lack of meaning structure, and stops in mid-utterance” (Tarone, 1980).

In summary, the taxonomy of CSs proposed by Tarone (1983) was based on her investigation of nine second language learners. This taxonomy is significant in the field because it covers most of CSs investigated in later studies. In addition, the definitions and examples of the CSs provided by Tarone are clear and illustrative.

### *2- 2 Faerch and Kasper's taxonomy*

The second significant classification of CSs was proposed by Faerch and Kasper (1983), as seen in Table 2-2.

According to Faerch and Kasper (1983 as cited in Kongsom, 2009), learners have two possible strategies in general for solving a communication problem: avoidance strategies in which they avoid the problem, and achievement strategies through which they find an alternative solution.

With avoidance strategies, the learner either avoids a linguistic form he or she had difficulty with (formal reduction) at one of the three linguistic levels of phonology, morphology or grammar, or avoids a language function at the actional, propositional, or modal level (functional

Table 2- 2 Faerch and Kasper's taxonomy of CSs (as in Kongsom, 2009)

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(1) Avoidance
(1.1) <i>Formal reduction:</i>
1.1.1 Phonological
1.1.2 Morphological
1.1.3 Grammar
(1.2) <i>Functional reduction:</i>
1.2.1 Actional
1.2.2 Propositional
1.2.3 Modal
(2) Achievement
(2.1) <i>Non-cooperative:</i>
2.1.1.1 Codeswitching
2.1.1.2 Foreignizing
2.1.2 Interlanguage strategies:
2.1.2.1 Substitution
2.1.2.2 Generalization
2.1.2.3 Exemplification
2.1.2.4 Word-coining
2.1.2.5 Restructuring
2.1.2.6 Description
2.1.3 Non-linguistic strategies:
2.1.3.1 Mime
2.1.3.2 Imitation
(2.2) <i>Cooperative:</i>
2.2.1 Appeals

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reduction) by, for instance, abandoning a topic (Cook, 1993).

Achievement strategies are divided into non-cooperative strategies and cooperative strategies.

In non-cooperative strategies, the learner tries to solve the problem without resorting to other people through L1 /L3 strategies, interlanguage strategies and non-linguistic strategies. When using L1/L3 strategies, the learner relies on a language other than the L2 by code switching, or trying out L1 expressions in the L2 with minimal adaptation by foreignizing. Interlanguage strategies are based on the evolving interlanguage such as substitution, putting one item for another; generalization, using a more

general word for an unknown word; description, describing something; exemplification, giving an example of something for which the learner does not know the word; word-coining, making up a new word to cover a gap; and restructuring, phrasing the sentence in another way. Non-linguistic strategies consist of mime and sound imitation. Lastly, cooperative strategies involve the help of another person.

These strategies consist of direct or indirect appeals. Faerch and Kasper's taxonomy of CSs, therefore, is more complicated than Tarone's taxonomy since it consists of more subtypes. However, there are some problems in the organization of their taxonomy.

According to Bialystok (1990), the distinction between two types of reduction (formal reduction and functional reduction) is not clear because the use of formal reduction may result in the use of functional reduction. For example, if the learner uses lexical formal reduction because he/she does not have the target word like “mushroom”, he/she may employ functional reduction to avoid discussing “eatable fungi” (Bialystok, 1990). This lack of distinction becomes a problem for the current study. In addition, some subtypes of Faerch and Kasper’s taxonomy are similar to those of Tarone’s taxonomy but their definitions and examples are not clear. Consequently, the current study includes only some achievement strategies (e.g., code switching, foreignizing, word-coining, non-linguistic strategies and appeals) proposed by Faerch and Kasper (1983) since the definitions and examples of such strategies are clear and illustrative.

In summary, the product-oriented taxonomies of Tarone (1977, 1983) and Faerch and Kasper (1983) have been criticized by several later researchers (Kellerman, Bongaerts and Poullisse, 1987; Bialystok, 1990; Kellerman and Bialystok, 1997) for their failure to generalize the taxonomies of CSs. That is, the product-oriented taxonomies emphasize descriptions of superficial difference in strategy types and ignore the cognitive process underlying strategy use of the learner. The next section presents the process-oriented taxonomies proposed by the Nijmegen group.

### *2- 3 Nijmegen project and compensatory strategies*

Another taxonomy based on underlying processes is presented in an extensive project to investigate compensatory strategies of the Nijmegen group. To include CSs in a cognitive framework, the Nijmegen group divides compensatory strategies into two major categories: conceptual and linguistic strategies, as seen in Table 2.3.

Conceptual strategies have two types: analytic (spelling out characteristic features of the concept) and holistic (using a substitute referent which shares characteristics with the target item). Linguistic strategies involve the manipulation of the speaker’s linguistic knowledge through either morphological creativity or transfer. The morphological creativity is the use of L2 rules of morphological derivation to create comprehensible L2 lexis. The strategy of transfer occurs when the speaker exploits the similarities between languages.

To summarize, there are only two main categories of CSs in the Nijmegen group’s taxonomy of CSs, i.e., conceptual and linguistic strategies. This taxonomy should include more types of strategies and needs revision.

### *2- 4 Bialystok’s taxonomy*

Bialystok (1990) conceptualizes two principal classes of CSs in the process-oriented

Table 2-3 The Nijmegen group’s taxonomy of CSs (as in Kongsom, 2009)

Conceptual strategies
a. Analytic strategies
b. Holistic strategies
Linguistic strategies
a. Morphological creativity
b. Transfer

Table 2-4 Bialystok's taxonomy of CSs (as in Kongsom, 2009)

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Analysis-based strategies
a. Circumlocution
b. Paraphrase
c. Transliteration
d. Word coinage
e. Mime
Control-based strategies
a. Language switch
b. Ostensive definition
c. Appeal for help
d. Mime

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approach: analysis-based and control-based strategies, as seen in Table 2.4.

According to Bialystok (as in Kongsom, 2009), the analysis-based strategies involve “an attempt to convey the structure of the intended concept by making explicit the relational defining features”. The strategies from the descriptive taxonomies that are included in the analysis-based strategies are circumlocution, paraphrase, transliteration, and word coinage where the attempt is to incorporate distinctive features into the expression, and mime where the attempt is to convey important properties (Bialystok, 1990).

The control-based strategies involve “choosing a representational system that is possible to convey and that makes explicit information relevant to the identity of the intended concept” (Bialystok, 1990). That is, the speaker keeps the original intention with the utterance and turns to different means of reference outside the L2. This taxonomy of CSs proposed by Bialystok, therefore, is based on a framework of language processing.

In summary, the two taxonomies proposed by Bialystok and the Nijmegen group share some similar aspects. That is, the analysis-based strategies in Bialystok's taxonomy are similar to the conceptual strategies of the Nijmegen group

in terms of the processing involved in their use. The control-based strategies in Bialystok's taxonomy contain more types of strategies than the linguistic strategies in the Nijmegen group. It should be noted that the definitions and exemplifications of Bialystok's taxonomy of CSs are clear and some strategies (e.g., circumlocution, word coinage and mime) are similar to Tarone's taxonomy of CSs.

#### 2- 5 Dornyei's taxonomy

Dornyei (1995) further collects a list and descriptions of the CSs that are most common and important in this core group, based on Varadi (1973), Tarone (1977), Faerch and Kasper (1983), and Bialystok (1990), as seen in Table 2- 5.

According to Dornyei (1995), the first two strategies are usually referred to *avoidance* or *reduction strategies* as they involve an alteration, a reduction, or complete abandonment of the intended meaning. Strategies 3-11 are grouped as *achievement* or *compensatory strategies* as they offer alternative plans for the speakers to carry out their original communicative goal by manipulating available language. Strategy 12 is an example of *stalling* or *time-gaining strategies*. These strategies are different from other strategies

Table 2- 5 Dornyei's taxonomy of CSs (as in Kongsom, 2009)

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Avoidance or Reduction Strategies
1. Message abandonment
2. Topic avoidance
Achievement or Compensatory Strategies
3. Circumlocution
4. Approximation
5. Use of all-purpose words
6. Word coinage
7. Use of non-linguistic means
8. Literal translation
9. Foreignizing
10. Code switching
11. Appeal for help
Stalling or Time-gaining Strategies
12. Use of fillers/hesitation devices

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mentioned earlier because they are used to gain time and to keep the communication channel open at times of difficulty.

It should be noted that this taxonomy of Dornyei (1995) provides the inclusion of stalling or time-gaining strategies to the existing taxonomies in the field. These strategies are not employed to compensate for vocabulary deficiency but rather to help learners to gain more time to think and maintain their conversation with their interlocutor.

#### *2- 6 Dornyei and Scott's taxonomy*

Dornyei and Scott (1997) reviewed articles and summarized the taxonomies and definitions of CSs proposed by researchers in the field. In the extended taxonomy of problem-solving strategies, they classified the CSs according to the manner of problem-management; that is, how CSs contribute to resolving conflicts and achieving mutual understanding (Dornyei & Scott, 1997). They separated three basic categories: direct, indirect and interactional strategies, as seen in Table 2-6.

According to Dornyei and Scott (1997), direct strategies contain “an alternative,

manageable, and self-contained means of getting the meaning across, like circumlocution compensating for the lack of a word” . Indirect strategies are not strictly problem-solving devices. They facilitate the conveyance of meaning indirectly by establishing the conditions for achieving mutual understanding: preventing breakdowns and keeping the communication channel open or indicating less-than perfect forms that require extra effort to understand. Interactional strategies involve a third approach, by means of which the participants perform trouble-shooting exchanges cooperatively (e.g., appeal for and grant help, or request for and provide clarification), and therefore mutual understanding is a function of the successful execution of both pair parts of the exchange (Dornyei & Scott, 1997).

The above taxonomy of CSs proposed by Dornyei and Scott (1997) is not only based on the summary of all the taxonomies in the field of CSs, but it also provides some new CSs such

Table 2- 6 Dornyei and Scott's taxonomy of CSs (as in Kongsom, 2009)

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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Direct Strategies</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Resource deficit-related strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Message abandonment</li><li>• Message reduction</li><li>• Message replacement</li><li>• Circumlocution</li><li>• Approximation</li><li>• Use of all-purpose words</li><li>• Word-coinage</li><li>• Restructuring</li><li>• Literal translation</li><li>• Foreignizing</li><li>• Code switching</li><li>• Use of similar sounding words</li><li>• Mumbling</li><li>• Omission</li><li>• Retrieval</li></ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Own-performance problem-related strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-rephrasing</li><li>• Self-repair</li></ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Other-performance problem-related strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other-repair</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Interactional Strategies</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Resource deficit-related strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appeals for help</li></ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Own-performance problem-related strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comprehension check</li><li>• Own-accuracy check</li></ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Other-performance problem-related strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Asking for repetition</li><li>• Asking for clarification</li><li>• Asking for confirmation</li><li>• Guessing</li><li>• Expressing non-understanding</li><li>• Interpretive summary</li><li>• Responses</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Indirect Strategies</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Processing time pressure-related strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use of fillers</li><li>• Repetitions</li></ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Own-performance problem-related strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Verbal strategy markers</li></ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Other-performance problem-related strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feigning understanding</li></ul>

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as use of similar-sounding words, mumbling, omission, feigning understanding and asking for repetition. In addition, they include use of fillers as part of “indirect strategies”. According to Dornyei and Scott (1997), these fillers are used to prevent breakdowns and keep the communication channel open .

For interactional strategies, they suggest to include some strategies such as appeal for help, confirmation check, comprehension check and clarification request. Based on the arguments above, the current study included four strategies of Dornyei and Scott’s interactional strategies (e.g., appeal for help, confirmation check, comprehension check and clarification request) as target strategies. In addition, use of all-purpose words and self-repair strategies were also included in this study.

## 2- 7 Rabab’ah’s taxonomy

Rabab’ah’s taxonomy (2001) was based on the pilot study which was conducted to assess the suitability of the tasks for eliciting the strategic behavior and the quality of the data collection procedures. New sub- categories were added to the taxonomy which were classified under the language switch strategy. They were classified according to the factors causing this switch. These sub categories are L1 appeal for help, L1-optional meaning, L1 ignorance acknowledgement strategy and L1 retrieval strategies. They are language switch strategies and each one was used for a particular reason. Another L2-based strategy added is called ignorance acknowledgement. This strategy is used when the learner admits his ignorance and does not try any other strategy to describe the language item needed.

Table 2- 7 Rabab’ah’s taxonomy of CSs (as in Kongsom, 2009)

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- A. L1-based strategies
1. Literal translation
  2. Language switch
    - a. L1 slips and immediate insertion
    - b. L1 appeal for help
    - c. L1-optional meaning strategy
    - d. L1-retrieval strategies
    - e. L1 ignorance acknowledgement
- B. L2-based strategies
1. Avoidance strategies
    - a. Message abandonment
    - b. Topic avoidance
  2. Word coinage
  3. Circumlocution
  4. Self-correction/ Restructuring
  5. Approximation
  6. Mumbling
  7. L2 appeal for help
  8. Self-repetition
  9. Use of similar-sounding words
  10. Use of all-purpose words
  11. Ignorance acknowledgement
-

The basis of the taxonomy is a consideration of the source of the information on which the strategy is used. This information may derive from the learner's native language which is referred to as an L1-based strategy, or the information may derive from the target language and in this case it is referred to as an L2-based strategy.

### *2- 8 Farrahi's taxonomy*

She has divided CSs into two subgroups i. e. linguistic strategies and non-linguistic strategies. linguistic strategies include those strategies which employ linguistic elements for compensation and deficiencies occurring during communication process, and the language user apply words and sentences which are linguistic elements of language to overcome breakdowns occurring during communication and saves communication from interruption. Non-linguistics strategies are those strategies which employ sounds, movements, objects, etc. which have nothing to do with words or other linguistic elements.

According to her, paraphrase happens when the speaker or translator uses different wording s to utter or write the same thing existing in the source text or language; this strategy includes approximation, circumlocution, explicitation/ elaboration, word coinage and exemplification. By approximation, the user employs synonyms or L2 elements which have some of the characteristics of a source language item not whole characteristics. In circumlocution, the language user tries to explain a L1 item for which she/ he does not have appropriate equivalent. In explicitation/ elaboration, the language user uses as many as linguistic elements needed to make his/ her receiver understand what she/ he means; by this strategy the user tries to uncover the hidden information present in the SL, she/ he does not add any information or concepts which is not said in the L1. In word coinage, the language user creates non existing words in L2

based on L2 grammar or word morphology rules; for example the user knows to add "er" or "or" to verbs in English language to make subject nouns, so she/ he creates the word " cooker" for "cook" or "advocator" for advocate"; this strategy is more useful when in communication process cognates are sent and received and which still exist they would lead to complete misunderstanding. Finally, in exemplification, to reach the communicative goal when the receiver does not understand the speaker or translator, the user decides to provide some examples using the phrase" for example" or "for instance".

In word for word translation strategy, the sender of the message, translates the material to be transferred to the receiver literally i. e. literally to be given the chance of being understood by the receiver.

In avoidance strategy, if the L2 user avoids some structures or words of which she/ he has no knowledge or mastery, it is called topic avoidance and if she/ he starts transferring the message in L2 but in the middle she/ he feels that she/ he cannot continue the process of transferring the message and the message is left unfinished it is called message abandonment.

In appeal for help, the sender of the message get help from his/ her receivers to know if they have understood him/ her or not using phrases such as " you know what I mean?" or " what do you call it?". It sometimes happens that the speaker does not remember something she/ he intends to say, in the same situation, also, she/ he can appeal for help.

When a specific word is not found or remembered, the language user makes use of general words such as " stuff" or " thing" which are called ' all purpose words".

When the exact item in L2 in not remembered or known by the user, the opposite of that or negative form of the verb plus its opposite can be of great help. For example, someone does not

know “slow down” in the sentence” slow down the car” but she/ he knows “speed up” so she/ he can say: “do not speed up” or the user can use “not beautiful” for “ugly”. This strategy can be used mostly for adjectives and verbs.. The last linguistics strategy can be use of key words. This strategy is mostly used when the language user does not know or have difficulty in using a specific grammar rule so that he/ she can use the key words of the message that he/ she intends to transfer. For example, instead of saying: “I am hungry and I need something to eat” he/ she can say : “I hungry food”.

The non-linguistic strategies include those strategies that do not employ linguistic elements in conveying the meaning. In use of sounds, when one cannot remember or does not know the name of an animal, she/ he can make the sound of it to make his/ her interlocutors understand him/ her.

By body gestures such as nodding head or making shapes by hands, eye movements etc. can lead the receivers understand their interlocutors.

Sometimes a pen and paper can help the speaker or interpreter make their receivers understand better what they say by drawing or painting. In this strategy, it does not need a professional painter and sometimes some sketches can satisfy the needs of the sender of the message.

At last, the objects and facilities around, if the speakers are aware of, can help to render the meaning. An apple, a piece of paper or a pack of chips can help the speaker and receiver understands each other better.

Because of the deficiency in vocabulary that both the speaker or interpreter or translator and the receiver of the message would have they become unable to make their interlocutor to understand them; what one can do is making

Table 2- 8 Farrahi’s taxonomy of CSs (2011)

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1. Linguistic strategies
    1. 1 Paraphrase
      1. 1. 1 Approximation
      1. 1. 2 Circumlocution
      1. 1. 3 Explicitation/ Elaboration
      1. 1. 4 Word coinage
      1. 1. 5 Exemplification
    - 1.2 Word for word translation
    1. 3 Avoidance
      1. 3. 1 Topic avoidance
      1. 3. 2 Message abandonment
    1. 4 Appeal for help
    1. 5 Use of all purpose words
    1. 6 Use of opposites or negatives
    1. 7 Use of key words
  2. Non-linguistics strategies
    2. 1 Use of sounds
    2. 2 Use of body gestures
    2. 3 Use of pictures paintings or drawings
    2. 4 Use of at hand objects facilities or equipments
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use of the objects around; for example one can take an apple and hit a pack of chips with it, what happens next is the probability of understanding!

The author's taxonomy is as followed in table 2- 8:

In summary, the taxonomy of CSs offered by Farrahi Avval (2011) is based on her experience of living with Iranian Azeris and communicating with them for a long time in such a situation in which the Azeris which were not able to speak or understand Persian and the researcher herself which knew nothing of Azeri language tried to learn how to communicate with each other by means of these strategies. It is hoped that this taxonomy helps to cover most of CSs investigated in later studies.

### 3 Conclusions

Putting it all together, with the difference in the surface of the proposed taxonomies, they all say the same thing; it is obvious that teaching and

learning CSs in universities to translation studies students and including them in course books, beside the theories and techniques of translation which are instructed and allocating enough time to apply them in translation tasks is a must so that they will improve the translation quality and make the job of translation a delightful job not a boring one. There seems to be many studies on the usage of these strategies in the field of language teaching and learning but not enough ones on their usage in the translation filed. The writer hopes that with reading this article the researcher of the field conduct more researchers on the usage of these strategies in the translation process and the effect they would have on the translation quality. Finally, it should be mentioned that learning these strategies is one of the basic tools in language proficiency even in native languages and it is recommended that this skill be learned by speakers of any language because these strategies raise the quality of communicating.

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## **Коммуникативные стратегии в переводе: обзор классификаций с 1977 по 2011**

**С. Ф. Аввал**  
*Иран*

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*В данной статье предпринята попытка обзора классификаций коммуникативных стратегий, предлагаемых учёными в области перевода, преподавания языков, а также предлагается собственная модель.*

*Ключевые слова: коммуникативная стратегия, перевод, обучение языку, студенты и преподаватели перевода.*

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