

THE EFFECT OF COMMUNICATIVE TASKS AND SPEAKING PROFICIENCY ON THE CHOICE OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Lamis Abdulrahmahn¹ and Shaik Abdul Malik Mohamed Ismail²

School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Abstract: *Speaking is vital in day to day communication. Consequently, this paper highlights the main concepts regarding communicative tasks and speaking proficiency and their effect on the choice of communication strategies. The paper also presents past and current studies related to this topic, especially the factors affecting the choice of communication strategies among the level of high, intermediate and low proficiency and their choices of strategies to solve language problems especially when they encounter communication breakdown. Furthermore, this paper explains how certain communicative tasks as a factor affects the choice of communication strategies. Finally, this paper provides some insights into students' selection of communication strategies to solve problems encountered during their communication process.*

Key Words: - communication strategies, speaking proficiency, communicative tasks

Introduction

In foreign language learning it is important to be able to achieve an effective communication. This effective communication includes sending and receiving meaningful messages. Some of the learners can produce effective speech; others may produce faulty start or even will find difficulties while speaking. Generally, language breakdown is considered as a normal process for the low proficient learners because it is part of learning process (Littlewoods, 2004). When foreign language learners of the language encounter a situation with a native speaker or even any proficient speaker of the language, they may not be able to express what they want to say effectively. Therefore, they will build up some techniques to solve these language problems; these techniques are called communication strategies (Ya-ni, 2007).

In this respect, in the field of foreign language and education, communication strategies are considered as an effective support to produce successful communication. The issue of how to communicate effectively in the foreign language becomes a crucial topic for both teachers and learners. Studies on the communication strategies used by the students will help the teachers to know how their students' cope with their language difficulties. Therefore, teachers can motivate their learners to employ effective communication strategies (Ya-ni, 2007).

Review of Literature

Communication strategies (CSs) research started to get the interest of researchers since 1970s and continue to gather the interest till this time. Many researchers agree that CSs are useful for EFL students in the language classroom (Dörnyei & Scotte, 1995; Ya-ni, 2007 and Nakatani, 2010). Some studies have shown the benefits of CSs and how they help students with their foreign language deficiencies. An advantage of using CSs is the possibility of developing students' ability of negotiation (Dörnyei & Scotte, 1995). According to Kasper and Keller man (1997) CSs are techniques used by the learners while they are interacting in a second or a foreign language in order to overcome their communicative difficulties. Foreign language learners enrol at English departments to pursue their studies.

However, these learners during the communication process with their colleagues or teachers may come across a lot of communication problems, especially when their language device is limited, and in order to convey their messages and remain in a conversation learners need to employ communication strategies (CSs). According to Littlemore (2003: p. 331) "communication strategies are the steps taken by language learners in order to enhance the effectiveness of their communication". Littlemore (2003) adds that communication strategies work as a device employed by the learners to overcome perceived barriers to achieving specific communication goals. The learners' ability to cope with communication problems is called strategic competence which is a part of communicative competence. Smith (2003) clarifies that the learners can improve their communicative competence by developing their ability to use some (CSs) in order to help them to compensate for their language difficulties.

Definitions of Communication Strategies

Communication strategies are defined as techniques employed by the students to overcome foreign language communication problems by using verbal or non-verbal devices based on their own ability and/or appeals for their interlocutors' help in order to keep his/her communication going. The problems may be due to their linguistic deficiency and/or a lack of content knowledge on certain topics (Brown, 2000).

All definitions of communication strategies serve the same purpose of describing ways to send a comprehensible message to the hearer and solve the language problems. The definitions of communication strategies in this study will be within the basis of two main perspectives; the psycholinguistic perspectives that was firstly propounded by Færch and Kasper (1983) and the interactional perspectives which was firstly proposed by Tarone (1980).

The interactional view emphasizes on communication strategies based on the interaction between the speakers. Tarone (1980) defined communication strategies as a mutual attempt of two

interlocutors to concur on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared. On the other hand, psycholinguistic definition usually focuses on the mental ability of using these communication strategies. Færch and Kasper (1983) defined communication strategies as a potentially conscious plan for solving problems encountered on the path towards achieving a particular communicative goal. There are a lot of strategies employed by the students such as reduction.

Theoretical Perspectives of CSs

Many researchers such as (Nakatani & Goh, 2007; Dörnyei & Scott, 1995; Tarone, 1981 and Færch & Kasper, 1983) have traditionally distinguished between two main approaches to reflect the use of communication strategies. These theoretical perspectives are the psycholinguistic approach based on mental perspective and the interactional approach which is based on an interactional perspective. Tarone (1981) and Dörnyei and Scott (1995) used the interactional approach of CSs in their studies while scholars such as Færch and Kasper (1983) and Bialystock (1990) used psycholinguistic approach of CSs. The following sections will explain the two theoretical perspectives in details.

The Interactional (inter-individual)

Tarone (1977; 1980; 1981) conducted the foremost studies on the classification of communication strategies. Subsequent researchers utilized her taxonomy of communication strategies as a basis for their studies, although with some additions and adjustments. Tarone's communication strategy taxonomy is based on the interactional perspective since it relies on efficient management of the meaning of words while speaking. Tarone (1981) classified her strategies into five sections: avoidance strategies, paraphrasing strategies, conscious strategies, appealing for help strategies and mime. Tarone's (1980) defined communication strategies as the mutual attempt of two interlocutors to concur on a meaning in a situation where the basic meaning structures of both sides of the interaction are dissimilar. In this regard, the interactional approach of CSs is concerned with the linguistic approach to communication.

The interactional approach classifies the communication process into terms of negotiating the meaning when a problem occurs during communicative tasks. The interactional approach of CSs describes communication strategies in discourse terms such as the listeners, the interlocutors, the circumstances around (the surrounded environment) and the settings (Sperber & Wilson, 1987). The nature of the interactional approach shows that the strategies used to resolve the meaning during a communication can facilitate foreign or second language acquisition. Occasionally, during a communication process, the learners cannot discuss what they want to or convey their thoughts effectively to the listeners. As a result, they use communication strategies as a key to solving their problems. Long (1983) in his study noticed that when the learners found any difficulty, they tend to adjust the negotiation (the message they want to convey) in a

comprehensible format to make the message understood. Long (1983) identifies two main interactional strategy shown in Figure 1.

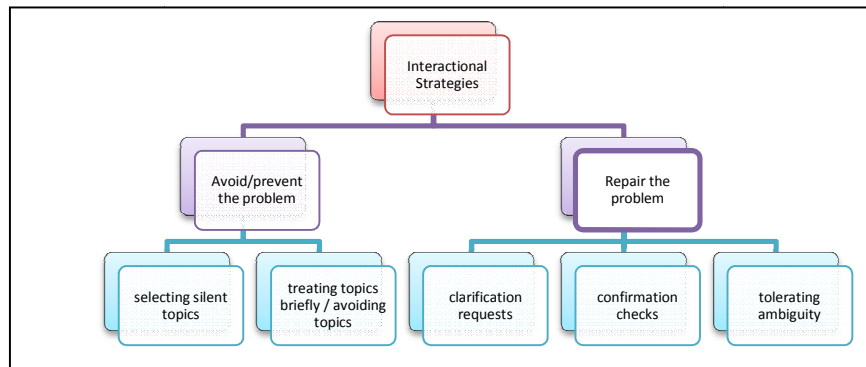


Figure 1: Types of Interactional Strategies Based on Long (1983)

Interactional strategies are divided into two strategies. The first strategy is the avoidance strategy which involves preventing the problem arising by completely avoiding a topic or by only negotiating small details about the topic. In contrast, the other type of the second strategy aims at repairing the problems that have occurred. For example, in clarifying a request, the speaker asks for more explanation of utterances or words. This can be done by asking a question like: ‘what do you mean? Confirmation checks, on the other hand, refer to the expressions the speakers used to verify that they understand what others said. The strategy also involves tolerating ambiguity, which is the speaker’s effort to deal with any vague terms, words or utterances by asking for details.

Most studies of communication strategies focus only on the elucidation of the request and the confirmation checks strategies, although with differences in opinion. For instance, Swain (1985) contradicted Long’s (1983) view of the comprehensible input. Long (1983) conducted a study to show the application of communication strategies in interactions. However, Swain (1985) indicated that the comprehensible input in Long’s study was not sufficient enough to explain the communication process and produce the required comprehensible output. Swain (1985) pointed out to the importance of not only receiving and understanding the input from the listeners, but also producing an effective output. He asserted that a detailed mutual understanding between the speaker and listener as a result of further clarifications by both ends will produce the valuable comprehensible input and pushed output (Swain (1985).

On the other hand, Pica (1994) emphasized on the importance of ‘negotiating the meaning’ of strategies, which are capable of facilitating the language acquisitions in three ways. Firstly, the

learners obtain comprehensible input from using communication strategies, but when they find further difficulties during communication breakdown, the learners attempt to divide the input into parts that can be produced easily into a more comprehensible output. Secondly, learners use the pre-negotiation phase (preparatory stage before speaking). This process alerts the learners' awareness that there is a problem needed to be solved. The learners will then reformulate their speech or utterances into a suitable output. Finally, the learners will produce the negotiation after they repair their problematic words or utterances. It is significant to note that negotiating the meaning strategy is the most important step in the oral communication process because it includes the best justifications and modifications. An outline of the negotiating the meaning' strategy is shown in Fig.2.

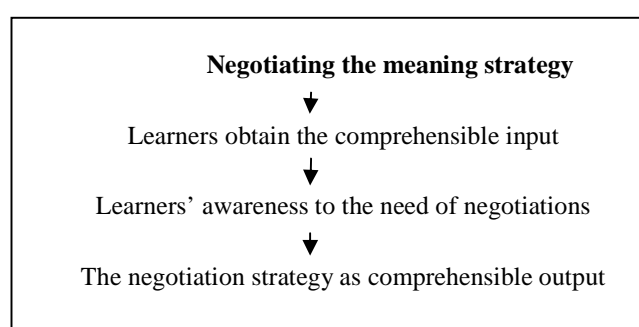


Figure 2: Negotiating the Meaning Strategy (Pica, 1994)

The Psycholinguistic

The Psycholinguistic perspective of CSs is based on the mental perspective of the non-linguistic approach. Communication strategies based on this approach are classified on the basis of observable behaviour from the learners underlying mental process. The Psycholinguistic theory emphasizes on the importance of using the mental process to study the behaviour of the learners (Maghrabi, 1997). Færch and Kasper's (1983) based their communication strategy on the Psycholinguistic approach.

Færch and Kasper (1983) perceive the use of communication strategies as a problem oriented and a conscious process. They asserted that learners employ communication strategies because they are aware of their second language deficiencies.

Færch and Kasper (1983) communication strategy taxonomy is divided into two types: achievement and reduction strategies. Achievement strategies mean attaining the focal goal of communication by searching for alternatives to maintain the flow of a conversation. Achievement strategies are further divided into compensatory strategies and retrieval strategies.

Compensatory strategies involve replacing the original goal of communication using alternative communication strategies such as code switching or word coinage. While, retrieval strategies occurs when the learners sustain the same goal of communication, but with additional more appropriate items for the conversation.

On the other hand, reduction strategies change the goal of communication by removing a phrase, a word or an utterance to make the conversation or interaction comprehensible to the listener. This is because the communicative problem usually encountered by the speaker may make the conversation unclear. Reduction strategies are divided into formal reduction and functional reduction strategies. Formal reduction comprises of the avoidance or neglect of some second language rules because they are not certain or confident of using the appropriate terms in a conversation, while functional reduction involves the avoidance of the speech acts in a conversation (Færch & Kasper, 1983).

Based on the division of communication strategies, the general model of speech production includes two phases: the planning and implementation phase, in the planning phase the speakers select the words, the rules and the expressions that will help them to achieve their communicative goal. During the planning phase the speakers can use communication strategies to repair their language difficulties. On the other hand, the implementation phase shows the speakers' attempt to achieve the goal of communication via applying the verbal behaviours.

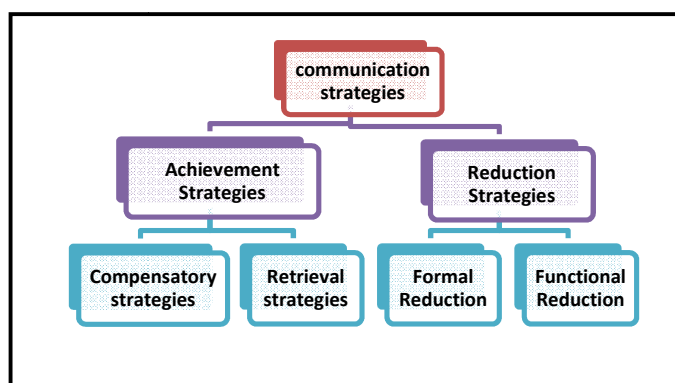


Figure 3: The Division of Communication Strategies (Færch and Kasper, 1983)

Bialystok (1990) also derived a model of communication strategies based on the psycholinguistic approach. According to Bialystok (1990), communication strategies are a result of a cognitive process that occurs in the learners' mind during language processing. Bialystok presented two

components of language processing in her cognitive framework: linguistic knowledge analysis and the control of the linguistic processing. Bialystok modified her model of communication strategies into knowledge based and control based strategies based on cognitive psychology. In the knowledge based strategy, the learners use their knowledge of the definitions or circumlocutions concept of psycholinguistic approach to adjust and convey the message. While, in control based strategy, the learners tend to maintain the same objective of communication, but with manipulation of meanings or expressions through the use of second language resources such as their first language or gestures.

To sum up, there are two main approaches in CS research: the inter-individual/ interactional approach and the intra-individual/psycholinguistic approach. The main difference between them is that the interactional approach focuses on external interactive strategies based on the performance in order to understand the underlying competence. Conversely, the psycholinguistic approach begins with the underlying competence in order to understand the performance of the learners. Both of the approaches give an important direction for the development of the research on CSs. Therefore, the researcher will take them into consideration in defining and selecting communication strategies for the sake of the present investigation.

The following section will present different taxonomies of CSs. These taxonomies reflect the approach advocated by the experts who proposed them.

Factors Affecting the Use of CSs

According to Littlewood (2004) there are a lot of factors that may influence the use of CSs such as the ability to learn, the opportunity for learning, and the motivation for learning. These factors are non-linguistic and measured by observation or statistical evidence. In any learning situation, these factors can directly influence the communication process. In this paper the researcher will discuss only the proficiency level of the learners and the communicative tasks since they are directly related to the title of the research.

The Speaking Proficiency Level

The proficiency level of the students strongly influences the choice of communication strategies. Bialystok (1997) supports this by arguing that the proficiency level of the speaker helps to predict the choice of the communication strategy, especially for less advanced language learners who find some difficulties in communication. There are many studies that discussed the relationship between language proficiency and the choice of communication strategies. The majority of these studies presented by: (Bialystok, 1983; Paribakht, 1985; Teng, 2011; Rabab'ah, 2001; Abu-Nawas, 2012; Nakatani, 2006; Yani, 2007 and Huang, 2010) proved that there is strong relationship between the language proficiency level and the use of communication strategies.

In general, low proficiency level of the learners uses more strategies to solve their communication blocks. On the other hand, high proficiency learners employ fewer communication strategies than low proficiency learners. The studies mentioned previously also elicited that high proficiency learners tended to use fewer avoidance strategies, but more compensatory strategies than low proficiency ones. In contrast, low proficiency learners depended on using avoidance strategies.

Communicative Tasks

Hedge (2000) explains that communicative tasks are given to the students in order to motivate and encourage them to develop their language skills by speaking the language as much as they can. Baker (2007) indicates that the selection of these speaking activities is based on the learners' need and the point to be studied. In other words, it is related to the course of study and the learners themselves. The point related to learners need is very important as Littlewood (2011) clarifies that learners' need in choosing these speaking activities can help the learners to develop their speaking skills. According to Harmer (2007) there are many types of speaking activities such as: free discussion, role play, simulation, information gap and narrative activities. The following lines will explain the previous activities.

a. Discussion

In the classroom English language teachers are using discussion activities to encourage the students to speak about any topic given to them. Teachers try to choose topics related to the students' interests. This is because learners will be more confident and motivated if they speak about topics of their interests. Moreover, the teacher can provide the students with the information, instructions and the time of the activity (Hedge, 2000).

According to Lazaraton (2001), this activity is the most commonly used by the students to find a result about what they are discussing. Discussion activity can be discussed individually or as pairs or groups as debates. According to Harmer (2007) there are two types of discussion activities that are free discussion and controlled discussion. Free discussion reflects an open discussion about any topic, but in this type the students should have knowledge and the basic information about the topic and an amount of time to express freely. On the other hand, controlled discussions are restricted with specific information and amount of time. It is worth mentioning that discussions raise the students' ability of using speaking skills and give them the chance to practice the strategies in interpersonal communication (Hedge, 2000).

b. Role Play and Simulation

Harmer (2007) explains that both of role play and simulation are effective in initiating the students' motivation to speak. It is worth mentioning that some scholars indicate that there are

some differences between role play and simulation activities. Hedge (2000) considers role play and simulation as one type activity “teachers use the term role play to refer to a number of different activities, ranging from simple dialogue promoted by specific information on role cards to more complex simulations which pass through a number of stages” (Hedge, 2000, p. 278). Harmer (2007) also have the same opinion that role play and simulation are the same and consider as one type since both of them help to encourage the students ‘oral fluency, but there is a slight different between them. Role play differs from simulation in that the students in role play activity need some information about imaginary characters of the role they will play. On the other hand, in simulation there is a real character the students are going to put themselves in their positions.

Both of role play and simulation needs good preparation before starting the activity to get the required result of the activity and achieve its goals (Hedge, 2000). Furthermore, Hedge (2000) indicates that the use of role play can be more useful if the teacher applies this activity as pair work or small groups. She adds “role play activity encourages participants from a large number of students, if it is based on real life situation” (Hedge, 2000, p. 280). According to Harmer (2007) there are some advantages of using simulation and role play they are: increase the students’ motivation, provide many opportunities to practice some roles that are similar to real life situations and help the students to express themselves.

c. Information Gap Activities

Harmer (2007) defines information gap activity as a situation where two or more than two students interact, in which one student has the information of the situation and the other student or students do not know anything. Littlewood (2011) explains that information gap activity depends on such tasks as pictures. The purpose of this activity is to discover the gap “the missing” element in the task and if all the students know the missing thing before starting the activity. Then this activity will be useless. In this activity the students are motivated to speak to complete each others’ information and achieve the goal of the task. According to Hedge (2000) this type of activity can be used as pair work, but it can also be applied as group work. She adds “this activity involves each learner in a pair or group processing information which the other learners do not have. The learners’ information must be shared in order to achieve an outcome (Hedge, 2000, p. 281). Harmer (2007) indicates that the advantage of using information gap activity is in helping the students’ ability of problem solving as well as acquiring new words.

d. Narrative Activities

Harmer (2007) defines narrative activities as the ability to tell a story or series of events with accuracy and clarity, narrative activities can be in either oral or written form. Oral narrative usually reflects what people organize and make sense of the events in their lives. It is worth mentioning the oral narrative activities have some difficulties such as the students’ poor

vocabulary, pronunciation and language skills. Examples of narrative activities are such as object identification, storytelling and picture describing. This type of activity can be used individually, especially object identification and picture describing. On the other hand, storytelling can be done individually or as groups in which one student starts and the other completes.

Studies on CSs

A lot of studies have investigated the use of communication strategies (CSs) by EFL learners of English and the factors affecting the choice of CSs such as: the proficiency level and the communicative tasks.

a. Previous Studies

In the eighties and nineties, studies were conducted on communication strategies (CSs) by Bialystok, 1983; Paribakht, 1985; Corrales & Call, 1985; Bongaerts & Poulisses, 1989; Si-Qing, 1990; Khanji& Rajai, 1993; Liskin, 1996; Flyman, 1997 and AbuNawas, 1999 (cited in AbuNawas (2012).

Bialystok (1983) conducted a study on 30 French students (advanced and intermediate) within the age range of 16 to 17 years old that have been studying English for five years. The aim of the study was to investigate the type of strategies used by students and what influences their choice of these strategies. The instruments used were close proficiency test and picture reconstruction. Bialystok requested the participants to describe to the native speakers the placement of cardboard objects on a flannel board. The results of the study showed that advanced learners tend to use fewer strategies of second language based strategies than intermediate learners who applied first based strategies. These results are supported by Paribakht (1985) who also investigated the type of communication strategies used by intermediate and advanced learners using a sample of 60 Persian students. The instrument used was a concept identification task. The students were divided into two groups (intermediate and advanced), and asked to describe concrete and abstract concepts. The results of this study showed that advanced learners used fewer strategies such as second language based strategies while intermediate students used first language based strategies.

Furthermore, a study supported the past two studies that the proficiency level of the students determine the choice of CSs was undertaken by Bongaerts & Poulisses (1989) to examine the referential CSs used by the participants to describe shapes without referring to their names. The sample of the study was 45 students; 30 students were from secondary school and 15 university students. The results of the study indicated that the types of CSs used by the learners varied with their proficiency level. This confirms that the students' proficiency level plays a significant role in students' choice of CSs. Another research is carried out to investigate the role of the proficiency level and was conducted by Si-Qing (1990) to investigate the communication strategies in interlanguage production by Chinese. The sample of the study is 12 Chinese

university students (high and low). The instruments were communicative task and audio recording of students' performance. The results show that low proficiency group applied more strategies than high proficient group. Low proficient group applied more repetition strategies and high proficient applied knowledge based strategies.

Early of the nineties, Khanii & Rajai (1993) were also interested in investigating the issue of effect of proficiency level of the Jordanian EFL learners on CS use. Their study title was the relation between interactional and psychological perspectives of communication strategies using 36 Jordanian learners of English who had an intensive English language program at the University of Jordan. The participants were divided into three groups based on the results of the placement test. The groups were: low, intermediate and advanced students. An oral test and a role play task were used to gather the data. The conversation of the students were videotaped and analyzed. The results showed the strategies used from each group were different. Three years later, a study was also conducted by Liskin (1996) on a sample of 30 Spanish speakers of English in order to analyze the overall use of communication strategies by intermediate and advanced speakers of Spanish. The instruments of the study were tape recording of students' performance in the interview. The results of the study show that advanced learners used more of second based strategies than intermediate speakers.

A study was conducted by Abu Nawas (1999) as cited in AbuNawas (2012) to investigate the factors affecting the choice of CSs for Jordanian students. The sample of the study was undergraduate Jordanian English learners. The findings of the study showed that there was a correlation between the students' proficiency level and the choice of communication strategies. The study also indicated that high positive motivation, attitude and high self esteem were driving forces in English communication rather than low negative motivation, attitude and low self esteem. In general, it can be observed from the above studies that Jordanian students; both high and low proficient learners, tend to use communication strategies to convey the message to the hearer.

For the studies that focused on the effect of the tasks of interactions; a study was carried out by Corrales & Call (1985), the aim of the study was to investigate the use of CSs to convey lexical meaning. The sample of the study was Spanish students from high and intermediate levels. The instruments used were recording students' performance and structured questions and unstructured simulated communication situations. The results clarify that the type of the task has a role in choosing the strategies because both of high and intermediate level groups used more transfer strategies in the unstructured simulated tasks (registered more use of transfer strategies). Another study was conducted by Flyman (1997) focused more on the effect of task of interaction in choosing the strategies, the title of the study was investigating the communication strategies used in French as a second language. The sample was 10 Swedish students. The instruments used were translation, picture, storytelling, recording of students' performance and retrospection

comments. The results of this study show that a lot of analytic, avoidance and appeal of assistance strategies were employed in the translation and picture describing task. On the other hand, transfer strategies were employed in the discussion task. In general, all studies conducted in the eighties and nineties aimed to investigate the students' use of communication strategies when they encounter any communication difficulties and the effect of the proficiency level and tasks used in the choice of CSs. All the previous studies results supported that the students used different strategies based on their proficiency level and the difficulty of task chosen.

b. Recent studies

In the new century some studies were conducted by Dobabo, 2001; Granena, 2003; Wannaruk, 2003; Weerarak, 2003; Rabab'ah & SeedHouse, 2004; Nakatani, 2006; Paramasivam, 2009; Mei & Nathalang, 2010; Dong & Fang-peng, 2010; Huang, 2010; Zayda, 2010; Al-Azzani, 2012; AbuNawas, 2012; and Uгла, 2013.

Dobabo (2001) conducted a study; the aim of the study was to investigate the CSs in interlanguage of Galician students. The sample of the study was 15 EFL students from different levels. The instruments used were picture story narration, picture describing, recording of students' performance and interview. The findings of the study were the students use avoidance strategies in the picture narration task than the picture describing. Moreover, low proficient students used more strategies than intermediate and high students. High proficient students used a lot of transfer strategies. Another study supported the previous study carried out by Wannaruk (2003) to investigate the communication strategies employed by ESL students. The participants were 75 Thai EFL students from different levels. The researcher used oral interview and video recording of the students' performance. The results showed that the strategies used by low proficient students were outnumbered the strategies employed by intermediate and high proficient students. Low proficient students tended to apply more of avoidance strategies.

Similarly, Weerarak (2003) conducted a study that focused on investigating the oral communication strategies employed by English major. The participants were 16 English language students from Thai university and from different proficiency levels. The researcher used oral test, oral interview conversation, picture describing and observation. The findings showed that low proficient students employed more strategies than other proficiency level groups. A supported study to the issue that low level students used more strategies was conducted by Dong & Fang-peng (2010) to investigate the Chinese learners' communication strategies. The sample of the study was 89 English major students. The instruments used were a questionnaire and an interview. The results showed that the students with low level used more reduction strategies. Later, study was conducted by Mei & Nathalang (2010) to investigate the use of communication strategies by Chinese students. The sample of the study was 117 EFL students. The instruments were tests and a questionnaire. The results showed that the choice of using CSs was influenced by students' proficiency level and the types and the tasks.

Moreover, some studies were conducted to focus on specific strategies applied on the bases of tasks given to the students; Granena (2003) conducted a study to investigate the appeal for assistance strategies. The sample was three groups of EFL Spanish learners from different levels. The instrument used in the study was a picture story narration. The findings of the study clarified that high proficient students applied few appeal of assistance strategies than low proficient students who applied more direct appeal of assistance strategies. Another study was conducted by Rabab'ah & SeedHouse (2004) the study aimed at investigating the communication strategies and message transmutation used by Arab learners of English in Jordan. The sample of the study comprised of thirty Arab English majors at Yarmouk University. The instruments used in the study were object identification (naming task); picture describing and role play task. The findings of the study showed that the students used communication strategies such as literal translation, circumlocution, code switching and avoidance in order to convey the message to the hearer effectively. The results showed that low level learners used more communication strategies to transmit the message to the listener than high level learners.

Paramasivam (2009) conducted a study to investigate the language transfer as a communication strategy. The sample of the study was 4 Malaysian students. The instruments were three tasks of interaction and interview. The results clarify that in all the three tasks the students used language switch and literal translation. A study was conducted by Nakatani (2006) to investigate the CSs used by the Japanese students. The sample of the study was 400 Japanese collage students varied between males and females, with ages ranging from 18 to 21 years old. The participants were divided into high oral proficiency group and low oral proficiency group. None of the participants had the experience to travel or study abroad. The researcher used a role play task followed by his own questionnaire as an instrument of his research. The findings of the study revealed that English foreign language learners faced many language difficulties.

Therefore, high oral proficiency speakers used more CSs than low oral proficiency speakers to maintain the conversational flow and control influencing communication factors. The students reported that using negotiation is vital to preventing communication breakdowns. Therefore, the choice of these strategies depended on their proficiency level. Nakatani (2006) also emphasized on the need to examine the role of gender in the choice of communication strategies, and the impact be taken into consideration in further studies.

The results of Huang's (2010) study do not support Nakatani's study that the proficiency level and the gender of the participants play a role on the choice of CSs. Huang (2010) a study was carried out to investigate the factors affecting the use of communication strategies. The sample of study was ninety eight students of the technological University of Taiwan. The instruments used are questionnaire and students' term grades on listening and speaking course as research instruments. The results of the study indicated that students primarily used message alternation strategies but less of the message abandonment strategies. The study also noted that gender and English proficiency played no significant roles in the choice of communication strategies.

Moreover, the use of communication strategy outside the classroom was more compared to inside the classroom because of the students' motivation to express their thoughts.

Another study in compensatory strategies was conducted by Zayda (2010) to investigate the oral compensatory strategies used by the Filipino college freshman students. The sample of the study was 41 Filipino college freshman students randomly selected from different eight private universities and schools. The instruments used by the researcher to collect the data were oral interview and picture-cued narration. The findings of the study revealed that the students used in picture-cued narration task frequently of the compensatory strategies such as switching to the mother tongue, asking for help, word coinage, circumlocution, approximation and using mime. These strategies helped the students to fix their communication problems. Al-Azzani (2012) conducted a study entitled the influence of the proficiency level and designed tasks on Yemeni students' use of communication strategies. The sample of the study was thirty undergraduate students randomly selected from English department at Sana'a University- Yemen. These students were divided as high and low proficient students after they took a proficiency test. The research involves both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The instruments used in the study were two instruments first the researcher gave the participants two communicative tasks that are: a concept identification and cultural based task. After that, the subjects were interviewed to record to elicit the strategies used by the learners. The results of the study indicated that both of the tasks designed and proficiency level of the students have strong effect on the choice of communication strategies. Low proficient students used more communication strategies than high proficient students. The use of these strategies was much in the cultural based task.

Unlike the previous study the results of this study is opposite; a study was conducted by AbuNawas (2012) on the communication strategies used by Jordanian EFL learners. The sample of the study was 66 males and females (sophomore, junior and senior English major) studying English at Zarka University. The instruments used in this study were picture description test and interview. The findings of the study showed that the students performed various strategies to convey their ideas by using different types of communication strategies. The choice of these strategies differed from one student to another according to their proficiency level and the task given; the results clarified that high proficient students used more strategies than low proficient students. Later, a study was conducted by Uгла (2013) on the communication strategies used by Iraqi EFL learners. The sample of the study was 50 males and females students studying English at Baghdad University. The instruments used in this study were a questionnaire adopted from Dörnyei and Scott's taxonomy (1995). The findings of the study showed that the students employed different type of communication strategies, especially high level students.

Insights

The use of communication strategies is inevitable in EFL. As mentioned in the previous studies, all students from different proficiency levels high and low tend to use communication strategies

to convey the message to the listener. The type of these strategies depends on some factors such as the students' proficiency level and task of interaction.

Proficiency Level of the students

High proficient students apply few positive communication strategies; these strategies are called achievement strategies. This is because they know the words or sentences they want to say but some of them use these strategies to raise the level of conversation (Dörnyei, 1995). There are a lot of achievement strategies such as using circumlocution: by giving a description of the word, approximation: using an alternative term instead of the exact word and using fillers such as: "well", "ok", "in a matter of fact" and "I think that". On the other hand, low proficient students tend to use a lot of communication strategies, especially avoidance strategies such as topic avoidance: by avoiding the given topic due to difficulties. Or message abandonment: by leaving the message unfinished because of its difficulty or ambiguity. It is worth mentioning that both of high and low proficient students are using transfer strategies and first language based strategies that are the use of their first language e.g. using literal translation from the students' first language to the second language. For appeal of assistance strategies it is noticed that low proficient students asked for a lot of help to understand the talk or to make sure of the meaning.

The Tasks of Interaction

It was noticed that the students apply more of avoidance and appeal of assistance strategies tasks related to translation or picture describing. Transfer strategies were employed in the tasks that required a lot of taking such as discussion or telling stories tasks. In naming tasks strategies, role play and picture narrating the students employed literal translation, circumlocution, code switching and avoidance strategies whenever they find difficulty in speaking. At this end, these two factors affect directly the choice of these strategies whether they are achievement or reduction strategies.

Conclusion

To sum up, communication strategies is considered as an important element in the process of communication, it promotes learners' competence. Foreign language learners use communication strategies to cope with their communication difficulties and solve their deficiencies in speaking by applying these communication strategies. Foreign language learners are inevitable to use compensatory or reduction strategies. Compensatory strategies raise the level of communication and help the leanness to keep on the conversation. In contrast, reduction strategies may hinder the process of communication and sometimes block it. On the bases of previous studies mentioned in this paper, the use of CSs strategies is affected by the students' proficiency level and the types of communicative tasks given to them.

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