A LITERATURE REVIEW ON COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

Communicating successfully means to pass on meaningful messages to the listeners. In order to achieve a successful level of communication in situations, where learners face problems when there is a mismatch between their communication goals and their linguistic resources, they tend to use devices to improve their level of communication; these devices are called Communication Strategies.This paper reviews and discusses the theoretical background of the study of Communication strategies in language learning. The first part of the paper presents the most common definitions of the Communication Strategies. The second part attempts to explain the relationship between Communicative Competence and Communication Strategies. The third part describes the types, taxonomies and the origins of the Communication Strategies. The final part sheds the light on a number of empirical studies related to types of Communication Strategies and the relationship between linguistic proficiency and Communication Strategies choice in the learner's first language and his/her second language.

Keywords: Communication strategies, communicative competence, language learning , proficiency level

Introduction

Nowadays, how to communicate orally in foreign language learning seems to be equally if not more important than reading and writing. Due to linguistic globalization as a growing trend in the modern world, most of the world's communities are multilingual, which makes contact among languages an important force in the everyday life. The word communication is derived from the Latin word "communico". It means to share, to take part in, to join or to connect. In other words, communication is defined as a process in which a message is sent from a sender to a receiver. The sender encodes a message and the receiver decodes it. Communication problems occur when the encoded message differs from the decoded message (Williams and Kemper 2004). When these problems occur, learners manage

to overcome them by employing what are known as communication strategies (henceforth, CSs) in order to fill in the gap between their communication intentions and the linguistic abilities they have.

Foreign language learners may face various communication problems when their language lacks the necessary resources. In order to convey their messages and remain in the conversation until their goals have been achieved, they need to use CSs to cope with these problems. Analysis of these strategies provides us with deep insight into the complex process of language acquisition and gives us ideas about how to help learners develop their competence. It is claimed that learners may improve their competence skills by developing and shaping an ability for using specific CSs to compensate for their target language deficiency (Bialystok, 1990; Dornyei, 1995). Therefore, for the purpose of facilitating the process of language learning, studying CSs is pretty significant.

Main Text

Definitions of CSs

Although there are many definitions of CSs in the literature, most of them are based on the concept of "problematicity" (Tarone, 1977, 1980, 1981; Bialystok and Frohlich, 1980; Faerch and Kasper, 1980, 1983, 1984). For example, Varadi defined CSs as "A conscious attempt to communicate the learner's thought when the interlanguage structures are inadequate to convey that thought." (Cited in Tarone ,1977:195).

According to Tarone (1977:195) CSs are "strategies used by an individual to overcome the crisis which occurs when language structures are inadequate to convey the individual's thought". Tarone(1980:419) also provides a broad explanation that characterizes a CS as a " mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared". Another definition is given by Tarone too "a speaker's attempt to communicate meaningful content in the face of some apparent deficiencies in the interlanguage strategies, and to distinguish them from those that promote learning or language production." Tarone (1980: 419) establishes three criteria that must be present in a communication strategy:

1. A speaker desires to communicate meaning X to a listener.

2.The speaker believes the linguistic or sociolinguistic structure desired to communicate meaning X is unavailable, or is not shared with the listener, the speaker chooses to:

– avoid/abandon his attempt to communicate meaning X.

– attempt alternative means to communicate meaning X. The speaker stops trying alternatives when it seems clear to him that there is shared meaning.

Corder (1983:16) defined CSs as "a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his meaning when faced with some difficulty." What is meant by difficulty here is lack of basic grammar and vocabulary in the target language.

Ammari (1991:70) points out that:

Corder draws the attention to the difficulty faced by the speakers' insufficient knowledge of the target language. In doing so , he offers a considerably different way in dealing with CSs . He refers to these strategies not in relation to errors, but in connection with ability analysis. He elucidates that these strategies are in balance in a native speaker, where in a learner they are not.

Faerch and Kasper (1983) theorized that the speaker in a communicative event begins with a goal. This goal can be related to the speech act, the relationship between speakers, or the content of the event. With the goal in mind, the speaker then enters a planning phase and eventually an execution stage. In other words, students are not always conscious of their strategy utilization. In the planning stage, if an obstacle occurs, the speaker chooses either to reduce one's goals— "reduction strategies"—or to seek alternative means for achieving the initial goal—"achievement strategies." If the problem occurs in the execution phase, the speaker could resort to "retrieval strategies" to achieve the goal. They locate CSs within a general psycholinguistic model of speech production. They demonstrate that these strategies are conscious plans employed by the speakers who face problems either in the planning or performing a language structure. Thus, they defined CSs as:

Potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents as a problem in reaching particular communicative goal. This definition is all encompassing in that it does not only refer to the learner or the non native speaker, but to a native speaker as well. CSs are located in the individual language user, who is the person to experience the problem and to decide on a strategic plan for its solution. (p.23)

Nayar (1988:63) proposed five criteria to identify CSs :

1-Noticeable deviance from native speaker norm in the IL syntax or word choice or discourse pattern.

2-Apparent, obvious desire on the part of the speaker to communicate "meaning" to listeners as indicated by overt and cover discourse clues.

3-Evident and sometimes repetitive attempts to seek alternative ways, including repairs and appeals, to communicate and negotiate meaning.

4-Overt pausological , hesitational and other temporal features in the speaker's Communicative behavior.

5-Presence of paralinguistic and kinesthetic features both in lieu of and in support of linguistic inadequacy.

Bialystok (1990) pointed out that although CSs researchers offer various definitions; these definitions seem to share the following three main features:

1. Problematicity: Strategies are adopted when problems in either learning or production are perceived and may interrupt communication. It is not part of the routine operations of language use.

2. Consciousness: This refers either to the learner's awareness that the strategy is being employed for a particular purpose, or the awareness of how that strategy might achieve its intended effect.

3. Intentionality: This refers to the learner's control over those strategies so that particular ones may be selected from the range of options and deliberately applied to achieve certain effects.

Bialystock also explained that "CSs may be used equally well in situations where no problems have arisen, as in the case when a native speaker gives a road description to a stranger using a long definition instead of the actual word." He argues that “CSs are continuous with ordinary language processing and cannot be served from it by virtue of distinctive feature”. This means that CS cannot be exclusively defined by reference to any particular feature because each feature is a matter of degree, as demonstrated in the arguments presented. He perceives problematicity as a notion that influences a speaker’s decision concerning the employment of CS. This means that a speaker only uses CS when he perceives problems which may interrupt communication.

Oxford (1990) defined CSs as strategies that are used to overcome problems in communication messages due to limitations in knowledge or working-memory overload during real-time communication. Examples of such strategies include: switching to the mother tongue, using mime or gesture, and adjusting or approximating the message. Language learning strategies, on the other hand, consist of attempts to promote linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the L2.

Brown (1994) expanded the definition of CSs further by including verbal and non-verbal mechanisms for solving the communication problem. This definition is very much similar to Canale and Swain (1980:27) who defined CSs as "verbal and non-verbal strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to ability variables or to insufficient competence." They also regarded CSs which they defined in their communicative model as the primary constituents in strategic competence.

Nanako (1996: 32) regarded the term “CSs” as problematic because many of the instances of their use in the literature could be attributed to insufficient awareness of discourse strategies. He also argued, however, that the distinction between phases and strategies is blurred. He questioned

whether speakers actually change their goals or not. He also added "problematicity arises from the disparity between the learner' s ends and means"

Khanji (1996) identified three components of CSs: 1) a communication difficulty owing to target language inadequacy, 2) student awareness of the problem, and 3) a solution to overcome it.

Khanji (1996) and Yule (1997) claimed that the difference between CSs and learning strategies is that the usage of CSs is contingent on problematicity: having a problem in achieving communicative goals for lack of linguistic devices. This issue of problematicity is not the case with learning strategies. However, Dornyei and Scott (1997) argue that the term 'problem' is not clearly defined, thus, causing considerable divergence in research on CSs.

This concept of problematicity also called "problem-orientedness" (Rampton, 1997:281) leads to problem-solving strategies that a speaker uses when lacking morphological, lexical, or syntactic knowledge. However, CSs research has primarily focused on lexical deficiencies within the speaker's knowledge, since lexical CSs are easy to identify (Kasper and Kellerman, 1997).

Mitchell and Myles (1998:94) defines CSs as "strategies that learners employ when their incomplete linguistic system lets them down." They also gave another definition based on Faerch and kasper definition. "tactics used by the non-fluent learner during L2 interaction, in order to overcome specific communicative problems" .

Generally speaking, earlier CSs researchers in the 1970s began their research by creating definitions and then by examining the characteristics identified by CSs. Later researchers in the 1980s, not only defined the CSs, but also they focused on evolving a systematic series of techniques and skills in different CS taxonomies (Lin, 2007)

In the 1990s, several significant works on CSs were published. One of the most valuable works was Bialystok's *CSs: A Psychological Analysis of Second Language Use.* In this work , Bialystok introduced the definitions and theories of CSs developed by many scholars such as Corder (1967,1983), Faerch and Kasper(1983), Kellerman (1978), Paribakht (1985), Tarone (1977,1980,1981) and Varadi (1980) . The researchers in the 1990s mainly investigated the relations between strategy application and different variables of proficiency level, gender, nationality, and teaching pedagogy (Lin, 2007).

In the 2000s, many researchers have played a great role in the field of CSs. Ansarin and Syle (1999) based their work on the teachability of CSs and offered several strategy training approaches. Rababah (2002) discussed

different definitions, taxonomies, and teaching pedagogies of CSs. Littlemore (2003) studied CSs from linguistic perspectives.

Communicative Competence

The goal of language acquisition is communicative competence: “a person's ability to get his message across with acceptable speed and accuracy, using what he judges to be the most appropriate linguistic coding devices” (Nakuma, 1997:200).The desired outcome of the language learning process is the ability to communicate competently, not the ability to use the language exactly as a native speaker does. The notion of communicative competence has its influences on developing language teaching in second language acquisition and in syllabus and material design. The development of communicative competence has contributed to the theoretical and practical changes that have taken place in the teaching and learning of English as a Second and Foreign language in the past few decades (Mali, 2007).

The idea of communicative competence was originally derived from Chomsky's distinction between competence and ability. He defined competence as "the shared knowledge of the ideal speaker-listener set in a completely homogenous speech community." and ability as "the process of applying the underlying knowledge to the actual language use." In Chomsky’s theory, his primary concerns were the “ideal speaker-listener, the homogeneous speech community, and perfect language knowledge” (Grenfell and Harris, 1999). Moreover, his definition of competence was limited to the knowledge of grammar, and ability was categorized into the other kind of knowledge of when, where, how and with whom, which was unsatisfactory (Hornberger, 1989) since he simply produced the grammatical sentences with no regard for their appropriateness (Paulston, 1990).

Halliday (1970) rejected the Chomskyan distinction between competence and ability by claiming that it is either misleading or unnecessary. According to him, we shall not draw a distinction between an idealized knowledge of a language and its actualized use .Later, Halliday (1978) developed a socio-semantic approach to language and the speaker's use of language in which the speaker's behavioral options are determined by social theory. These behavioral options can be translated linguistically into semantic options and the semantic options are coded as options in linguistic forms.

Hymes (1972) proposed that communicative competence should include the social meaning. Hymes (1972:59) generated a framework for communicative competence which included both rules of grammar and rules of use into it; he generalized four questions as follow:

(1) Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible.

(2) Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible.

(3) Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate.

(4) Whether (and to what degree) something is done.

He suggested that linguistic competence is a sub-division of the communicative competence and that Language is one mode of communication among others, and full communication involves mastery of all the codes - gesture, position, non-verbal vocalization, use of visual aids and so on. Hymes indicates that the sociocultural aspects, which embodies the knowledge of contextual appropriacy of an utterance is important. This involves knowing when, how and with whom to use the appropriate grammatical forms.

Widdowson (1978:3) used the two terms "Use" and "Usage" to refer to two aspects of communicative ability:

a) the ability to produce correct sentences, or manifestations of the linguistic system = USAGE.

b) the ability to use the knowledge of the rules for effective communication = USE.

Widdowson differentiates between the two terms "usage" and "use". This differentiation is based on the notion of "effectiveness for communication". This means that an utterance with a well-formed grammatical structure may or may not have a sufficient value for communication in a given context.

Bachman (1990) explains that Widdowson's approach is considered as discourse-based approach. He indicated that in the normal circumstances of daily life, we are generally required to use our knowledge of the language system in order to achieve some kind of communicative purpose, but the type of output one may expect from a student who has been subjected to a particular kind of instruction, and who will therefore be asked to produce sentences to illustrate his/her level of target language acquisition, is a clear example of usage.

In second language learning, communicative competence has been studied by different scholars such as Selinker (1972), Tarone (1980), Faerch and Kasper (1983), Poulisse et.al (1990), and Bialystock (1990). However, the focus tends to be on how learners manage a conversation when their knowledge of the target language is limited. It involves coping strategies of their interlanguage**.**

Canale and Swain (1980) proposed their model of communicative competence which incorporates three components of competencies 1- grammatical competence (knowledge of grammatical rules, lexical items, syntax and phonology of the language); 2-sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of the sociocultural code of language use), 3- strategic competence (ability to effectively transmit information to a listener including the skills to use CSs to compensate for breakdowns in communication). They

believe that at some point prior to the final selection of grammatical options, semantic options and social behavior options, grammatical forms must be screened for the following criteria:
Canale and Swain (1980: 27-31)

(1) grammatical complexity;
(2) transparency with respect to the communicative function of the sentence
(3) generalizability to other communicative functions.
(4) the role of a given form in facilitating acquisition of another form.
(5) acceptability in terms of perceptual strategies.
(6) degree of markedness in terms of social geographical dialects.

Canale (1983) later added another component to the model which is the discourse competence (concerns how a speaker selects, sequences and arranges words into a unified spoken or written text). Canale (1983:130) also proposed a broader perspective of communicative competence when he stated "it is essential to know how to exploit the knowledge of the language in actual communication."

Richard and Rodgers (1986:70) considered that “this communicative competence theory of what knowing a language entails offered a much more comprehensive view than Chomskean view of competence, which deals primarily with abstract grammatical knowledge. From this brief account, it can be concluded that the ability to manipulate the structure of the language correctly is only a small part of what is involved in learning a language, and there is, according to Newmark(1966), “something else” that needs to be learned or acquired.

In the 90s, Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurell (1995:9) developed a model of communicative competence, in which strategic competence included “…an inventory of skills that allows a strategically competent speaker to negotiate messages and resolve problems or to compensate for deficiencies”.

Cohen (1998) pointed out that by taking a deep look at these models of communicative competence, we can conclude that successful learners may use their strategic competence to keep a conversation going when facing problems. Most of these problems are lexical, as the number of unknown words always seems to outnumber the number of known items.

Generally speaking, the concept ‘communicative competence’ covers four areas of knowledge and skill : Linguistic competence which is knowing how to use the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of a language; sociolinguistic competence which is knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately, given the setting, the topic, and the relationships among the people communicating.; discourse competence which is knowing how to interpret the larger context and how to construct longer stretches of

language so that the parts make up a coherent whole and strategic competence which is knowing how to recognize and repair communication breakdowns, how to work around gaps in one's knowledge of the language, and how to learn more about the language and in the context focusing on pragmatic function of communication. Studying the pragmatic function of communication has added a significant contribution to the concept of communicative competence. Thus the new term 'pragmatic competence' was introduced to emphasize not only the appropriateness of language in its social context but also the function of language use to achieve communicative goals.

Paribakht (1985:136) points out:

strategic competence in L1 is transferable to L2 learning situations. Adults L2 learners were found to enter the L2 learning situation with a fairly developed knowledge of strategic competence. Strategic competence is 'activated' when learners are unable to express message successfully since their linguistic resources are limited.

Bachman divided communicative competence into two types "organizational competence," which includes both grammatical and discourse (or textual) competence, and "pragmatic competence," which includes both sociolinguistic and "illocutionary" competence. Strategic Competence is associated with the interlocutors' ability in using CSs (Lin, 2007).

Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) added a new component to the features of communicative competence, and so extended the model. The new component is the actional competence, which is distinguished from the sociocultural competence. Actional competence concerns how well a speaker can match his communicative intent with the linguistic form. They also indicate that certain competencies are more static compared to others. In addition, there are also more dynamic competencies. Accordingly, a speaker's progress in language proficiency is attributed to the dynamic characteristic of strategic competence. Dornyei and Thurrell (1991) concluded that advanced level proficient learners use more achievement strategies when compared to less proficient learners. These studies also provide evidence to confirm the theoretical assumptions that strategic competence exists fairly independently of the other components of communicative competence.

Types of CSs

The number and type of CSs that second language learners use constitute a topic of interest to SLA researchers because of their apparent role in the L2 acquisition process (Ghelichli, 2002; Smith, 2003).

Other researchers (e.g. (Beauvois, 1992b) add another task—free discussion. Studies on free discussion have focused on content and on how

students express their ideas. Most studies employing jigsaw tasks have been limited to examining the negotiation of meaning among interactants (Blake and Rapanotti, 2001; Fidalgo-Eick, 2001), an aspect that does not appear of paramount concern in free discussion. Very few free discussion studies examine negotiation of meaning and how students resolve communicative problems (Fernández-García and Martínez Arbelaiz, 2002; Lee, 2002). What follows is a closer look at why the main task utilized by the current study, namely free discussion, is not included in the aforementioned typology and why free discussion is most pertinent to this study.

Free discussion refers to a situation where learners engage in a discussion of a given topic in a classroom situation. Oscoz (2003:33) defined such tasks as "activities in which students converse about a reading or class topic in the online environment". Free discussion has also been used by other researchers, among them: Beauvois, 1992b; Darhower, 2002; Kelm, 1992; and Kern, 1995.

Taxonomies of CSs

The taxonomies of CSs vary depending on whether the focus is on the produced verbal interaction (Tarone, 1980, 1983; Faerch and Kasper, 1983; Yule and Tarone, 1997) or on the cognitive process of selecting CSs (Bialystok and Frohlich, 1980; kellerman and Bialystok, 1997; Poulisse, 1997).

Many researchers have conducted studies based on different taxonomies. The oldest taxonomy was developed by Tarone (1977).

Tarone's taxonomy of conscious CSs

(Tarone cited in Bialystok, 1990: 39)

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

Another taxonomy was developed by Dornyei (cited in Brown, 2000:128) As follows:

Avoidance Strategies

1. Message abandonment: Leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties.

2. Topic avoidance: Avoiding topic areas or concepts that pose language difficulties.

Compensatory Strategies

3. Circumlocution: Describing or exemplifying the target object of action (e.g. the thing you open bottles with for corkscrew).
4. Approximation: Using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target lexical item as closely as possible (e.g. ship for sailboat).
5. Use of all-purpose words: Extending a general, empty lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking (e.g. the overuse of thing, stuff, what-do-you call–it, thingie).
6. Word coinage: Creating a nonexisting L2 word based on a supposed rule (e.g., vegetarianist for vegetarian).
7. Prefabricated patterns: Using memorized stock phrases, usually for "survival" purposes (e.g., Where is the ___ or Comment allez–vous? where the morphological components are not known to the learner).
8. Nonlinguistic signals: Mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation.
9. Literal translation: Translating literally a lexical item, idiom, compound word, or structure from L1 to L2.
10. Foreignizing: Using a L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonology (i.e., with a L2 pronunciation) and/or morphology (e.g., adding to it a L2 suffix).
11. Code-switching: Using a L1 word with L1 pronunciation or a L3 word with L3 pronunciation while speaking in L2.
12. Appeal for help: Asking for aid from the interlocutor either directly (e.g., what do you call…?) or indirectly (e.g., rising intonation, pause, eye contact, puzzled expression).
13. Stalling or time-gaining strategies: Using fillers or hesitation devices to fill pauses and to gain time to think (e.g., well, now, let's see, uh, as a matter of fact).

From the above taxonomies, it is obvious that there are a group of similarities between Dornyei's and Tarone's taxonomies of CSs. They both present seven types in common, which include message abandonment, topic avoidance, circumlocution, approximation, word coinage, literal translation and appealing for help. An example of one of these similarities, Tarone (1977) explains "approximation" as "the use of a single target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features…." (cited in Bialystok, 1990: 40); and Dornyei's definition is "using an alternative term which expresses the

meaning of the target lexical item as closely as possible" (cited in Brown, 2000: 128).

As for the differences, there are Four obvious ones: (1) on the one hand, Dornyei (1995), divides CSs into two opposite categories—avoidance and compensatory according to the consequence of communication. On the other hand, Tarone presents five major types: avoidance, paraphrase, conscious transfer, appeal for assistance and mime. (2) Dornyei presents three more types of compensatory strategies than Tarone, which are use of all-purpose words, prefabricated patterns and stalling or time-gaining strategies. (3) In Tarone's typology, mime is a separate category which is explained as "all nonverbal accompaniments" while Dornyei ranges mime together with gesture, facial expression and sound imitation to nonlinguistic signals. In that case, nonlinguistic signals provide learners with a more comprehensive description than mime (4) Language switch can be assumed to be the combination of foreignizing and code-switching. The former is defined as 'the straightforward insertion of words from another language' (Tarone cited in Bialystok, 1990: 41). Foreignizing refers to 'using a L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonology and/or morphology'; and code switch means 'using a L1 word with L1 pronunciation or a L3 word with L3 pronunciation while speaking in L2' (Dornyei, cited in Brown, 2000: 128).

Compared to Tarone's Taxonomy, Faerch and Kasper's (1980) was more detailed. They started by talking about Reduction strategies and Achievement Strategies. Faerch and Kasper theorized that the speaker in a communication event begins with a goal. This goal can be related to the speech act, the relationship between speakers, or the content of the event. With the goal in mind, the speaker then enters into a planning phase and eventually an execution stage. In the planning stage, if an obstacle occurs, the speaker chooses either to reduce one's goals— "reduction strategies"—or to seek alternative means for achieving the initial goal—"achievement strategies." If the problem occurs in the execution phase, the speaker could resort to "retrieval strategies" to achieve the goal.

In his taxonomy, Bialystok (1990:133-134) tried to develop a psychologically plausible system of CSs. Bialystok conceptualized two main classes of CSs, "analysis-based" and "control-based" strategies. The former involves attempts "to convey the structure of the intended concept by making explicit the relational defining features" that is, to manipulate the intended concept on the basis of its analyzed knowledge. The latter involves "choosing a representational system that is possible to convey and that makes explicit information relevant to the identity of the intended concept" that is, holding the original content constant and manipulating the means of reference used to express the concept.

Poulisse and Bongaerts (1994) argued that" the main problem with previous taxonomies is that they are insufficiently related to theories of language use or development, so that studies which adopt them cannot provide much insight into the cognitive processes underlying CSs use." Instead of the existing product-oriented taxonomies, her aim was to produce a context-free, process based taxonomy of CSs that met three basic requirements: (a)parsimony, the fewer categories the better; (b) generalizability, independence of variation across speakers, tasks, languages, and proficiency levels; and (c) psychological plausibility, a taxonomy should be "informed by what is currently known about language processing, cognition and problem-solving behaviour" (Kellerman and Bialystok, 1997 cited in Poulisse and Bongaerts 1994).

CSs can be studied from two sides: psycholinguistic and interactional. Dobao and Martínez (2007) reworked on strategies proposed by Tarone (1977, 1980, 1981) and Poulisse (1993, 1997) and developed a taxonomy which engages both Psycholinguistic perspectives which focus on the cognitive processes the learner engages in when becoming aware of a linguistic difficulty (e.g. Færch and Kasper 1980, 1983, 1984; Bialystok 1990; Poulisse 1990; Poulisse 1993, 1997; Kellerman and Bialystok 1997)and interactionist perspectives which treated CSs as elements of discourse and focused attention on the linguistic realization of CSs (e.g. Varadi 1973; Tarone 1977, 1981; and Corder, 1983).

Empirical studies on CSs

A large number of empirical studies were conducted in the field of CSs. Researchers have focused on the language produced by the learner. They have treated CSs as isolated units of analysis. Thus CSs have been studied as part of the learner's use of the language and not as the product of the interaction taking place between learners. Various studies with different objectives were conducted in this field of study; examples of these objectives are the following:

To identify the different types of CSs available (Tarone 1977, 1981; Færch and Kasper 1980, 1983; Poulisse 1993; Dornyei and Kormos 1998) the factors affecting the learner's choice of specific CS types, such as proficiency level (Tarone 1977; Bialystok 1983; Paribakht 1985; Fernández Dobao 2001), native language (Palmberg 1979) to identify the personality and learning styles (Haastrup and Phillipson 1983; Littlemore 2003), or task-demands (Bialystok 1983; Poulisse ,Bongaerts and Kellerman 1990; Fernández Dobao 2001) to explain the potential communicative effectiveness of the different types of strategic utterances produced by the learner (Ervin 1979; Palmberg 1982; Bialystok 1983; Poulisse ,Bongaerts and Kellerman 1990); and finally, to present the possibility of instructing the foreign language learner on the effective use of CSs (Færch and Kasper 1986;

Dornyei and Thurrell 1991; Dornyei 1995; Jourdain and Scullen 2002). The researcher selected some of these studies to talk about in detail.

Faerch, et al. (1984) explained how low-level learners may sometimes benefit from being aware of the advantages of asking for help instead of just giving up or using a native language word. At intermediate levels, learners use a larger repertoire of strategy types, although individual learners often have their own preferences for specific types. There is some evidence that those learners who have the most limited linguistic skills are also the least efficient strategy users. Finally, at advanced levels, one might expect to find few CSs because learners who have proceeded this far might be expected to have a closer fit between their interlangauge resources and their communication needs. However, it could be argued that the better one's proficiency in the foreign language, the greater his/her communication ambitions. For this reason, one might still expect a fair number of strategies even in the speech of advanced learners.

Nayar (1988) also conducted one of the first empirical studies, which investigated the effect of learner's proficiency level in relation to the use of CS using natural unelicited data. Data was collected from seminar discussions of ESL learners. The subjects had varied different proficiency levels classified as intermediate, advanced, and high advanced. Activities in the seminars allowed the learners to communicate their ideas freely and to exchange real information; in comparison to structured drills tasks as most studies on CS does. The strategies were analyzed across proficiency levels in terms of their range, frequency of occurrence, and popularity. The results revealed that in general, learners from all the three levels of proficiency employed linguistic, interactional and non-linguistic strategies. The more advanced learners used less CS and their dependence on the non-target language based strategies was also reduced.

Bongaert and Poulisse (1989) showed that when speakers are confronted with communication problem, they overcome it regardless of their L1 or L2. A total of thirty Dutch secondary school students; 15 junior high school students, 15 high school students and fifteen Dutch university students of English participated in the study. They were divided into three groups (advanced, intermediate, and low) depending on the number of years of their English study, school report marks and teacher judgments. It was concluded that the same type of CSs were used regardless of language.

Poulisse and Schills (1989) worked with three different groups of learners characterized as advanced, intermediate and beginning learners of English. The subjects were tested individually across three oral tasks: (1) picture description; (2) story-retelling task, and (3) a twenty minutes interview with a native speaker of English. A process-based taxonomy that distinguished between conceptual and linguistic strategies was used to

investigate the types of compensatory strategies used by the subjects. It was reported that the higher the proficiency level of the learners, a smaller number of CS was used and that there was no consensus between the proficiency level and the strategies employed. Rather, it was the nature of the task that determined the CSs.

Iwai (1995, 2000) investigated the relationship between linguistic proficiency and CS choice in the learner's first language (L1) and his/her second language (L2). Thirty-two college students participated in this study, and were divided into two groups, which were a high level English proficiency group and a low level English proficiency group according to TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) scores administered in May, 1994. First, they were asked to describe nine abstract pictures in Japanese. The pictures were the same used in Bongaerts and Poulisse (1989). Three of the pictures were distracters, and six pictures were used for the analyses of the study. One week later, subjects were asked to perform the same task in English. All utterances were recorded and transcribed. Linear perspectives were used when subjects break a shape up into its ultimate components such as lines and angles. The study resulted in the fact that, proficiency level did not influence CS choice either in L1 or in L2.

Stewart and Pearson (1995) conducted a study to examine the CSs in a negotiation task involving eight university students who were divided into native speakers and non-native speakers of Spanish dyads. The results of the study suggest that certain types of CSs can be a valuable aid to communication. The most successful interaction reveled that clarification requests clearly articulated in the target language by the non-native speakers coupled with rephrasals in a more simplified form on the part of the native speakers were the most effective CSs. The study had very important implications for language teaching. The researcher explained that CSs can enhance communicative ability ,and providing assistance to learners in accessing CSs may aid them in their quest for L2 proficiency .As these strategies form part of the overall communicative competence of all native speakers ,many of them are applicable for use by learners in the target language as well. The two researchers strongly believe in providing students at all levels with access to any or all tools to foster interactional ability.

Target language proficiency is one of the researched variables that affect CSs. It has been suggested that the speakers' choice of the CS and their level of target language proficiency may be related (Tarone, 1977; Corder, 1983). The findings of some research studies suggest that less-proficient learners use more CSs (Poulisse and Schils 1989; Liskin-Gasparro 1996) and prefer reduction strategies (Ellis , 1985) and rely more on L1 strategies

compared to more proficient learners (Bialystok and Frohlich 1980; Bialystok 1983; Haastrup and Phillipson 1983; Paribakht 1985).

Chen (1990) worked on the relationship between linguistic proficiency and CSs choice. Poulisse and Bongaerts (1994) and Iwai (1995, 2000) investigated CSs of subjects' first language (L1) and their second language (L2). Nakano (1996) and Poulisse and Bongaerts (1994) researched into tasks and CSs choice. These studies have provided a good understanding of how the use of CSs might change as learners master the target language.

Nevertheless, some studies focused on the notion that CSs are also used by L1 speakers (e.g. Tarone, 1977; Trosborg, 1982; Faerch and Kasper, 1983). Wanger (1983: 167) formulated the point of the use of CSs in L1 as follows:

We want to insist on the interrelationship of all communicative behavior and emphasize the similarity, but also the difference, between the communication of native speakers and that of IL users. The similarity is caused by the fact that gaps in their linguistic repertories, and consequently there are no strategies which are specific for IL users. Normally, however, IL users have to improve much more than native speakers and create situations in their verbal plans in an ad hoc manner. This is particularly so in the area of vocabulary.

Rababah and Bulut (2007) investigated the communicative strategies used in the oral discourse of second year students studying Arabic as a second language (ASL) in the Arabic Language Institute at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The study examined the various strategies used by a sample of 24 male learners who were all high school graduates from 8 different countries (Russia, Kosovo, Senegal, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Benin, Malaysia and Ethiopia). The subjects were audio-recorded while performing two tasks: an interview and a role-play. The data were transcribed and analyzed. The results showed that the subjects used a range of communicative strategies in their oral production. Moreover, there were differences between the individual learners' strategies according to their native language. The findings of the study showed that ASL learners were risk-takers, and they expanded their limited linguistic resources to achieve their communicative goals.

Daboa and Martinez (2007) examined how learners and their interlocutors manage to communicate meaning through the use of CSs. Data analyzed in their study was collected at the University of Santiago through a task-based experiment, which was both audio and video recorded. Thirty-two subjects were paired on four different dyad conditions. The results obtained showed different kinds of communication grounding techniques. In some cases CSs were accepted by the addressees (acknowledgments, displays and demonstrations, initiation of a relevant next contribution and continued

attention) while in some others the initial CS uttered by the learner was not accepted and had to be followed by a negotiation of meaning process.

Ting and Phan (2008) examined how the use of CSs was influenced by the target language proficiency of speakers of English as an Additional Language. The oral interaction data from 20 participants in Malaysia were analyzed to identify the choice of CSs and the type of communication strategy category , using an integrated framework comprising psycholinguistic (Faerch and Kasper 1980), interactional (Tarone 1980) and discourse perspectives (Clennell 1995) . The results showed that the two groups did not differ in the total number of CSs used, and the preference was for strategies based on the second language (L2). Less proficient speakers inclined towards strategies based on first language (L1), language switch in particular, to overcome communication difficulties. More proficient speakers were able to use tonicity to show salience of information to enhance the negotiation of meaning. The proficient speakers compensated for lack of linguistic ability in their interlocutors, and the conversational adjustment was characterized by the diversified use of lexical repetition to maintain the conversation.

Conclusion

After reviewing studies about CSs, most of these studies focused on the types and identification of CSs used by learners of a second or a foreign language. It also shed light on the link between these strategies and learner's proficiency levels. The results of such studies may provide additional insight into the nature of leaner's ability and the construct of language proficiency itself.

CSs were defined by many researchers in the reviewed studies, they generally consider them as devices used to solve problems in communication or to fill gaps in the speakers' second language proficiency .However; there is still no universally accepted definition of CSs. Perhaps because of the problems of the definition, there is no generally agreed upon typology of CSs. The review of the literature showed that there were many kinds of CS taxonomies, most of which were rather similar such as the taxonomies that have been proposed by Tarone ,1980; Faerch and Kasper ,1984; and Bialystok, 1990).

From the reviewed literature, research has shown that there is a relationship between the frequency of CS use and proficiency level. When the proficiency level of a learner increases, the number of CSs used decreases (Labarca and Khanji 1986; Poulisse and Schils, 1989). Low proficient learners do not have the linguistic resources to use many of the CSs, and high proficient learners do not need to use them.

Although there has been extensive research into CSs on native and EFL learners, few studies were carried out on Arab learners of English or on

Arab Students using the Arabic language (Rababah,2005;Rababah and Seedhouse,2004 Rababah and Bulut, 2007).

Further research on the use of CSs among speakers of Arabic language is recommended because first of all, there are not many studies conducted to determine what types of CSs speakers of Arabic use and second, it is important to determine whether these CSs are universal or not. Conducting such studies may also help speakers of Arabic improve their oral skills because even the native speakers of a language find themselves weak in using it in oral communications.

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