

THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ON COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES: AN INTERACTION-BASED RESEARCH IN AN INDIAN ESL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

The current research examined the communication strategies used by Indian learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). It sought to uncover the correlation between proficiency in a language and the utilization of communication strategies. Seventeen partners with varying degrees of proficiency were invited to negotiate two video films as part of an interaction-based technique, including stimulated-recall interviews. The “Kruskal-Wallis test” findings indicate that participants use specific methods, including fillers, self-repair, and self-repetition. The proficiency level did not emerge as a determining factor in learners’ method selection. However, notable distinctions were seen in three strategies: ‘message reduction,’ ‘subject avoidance,’ and ‘mime.’ These results enable the generation of consequences that should be considered while constructing courses.

Keywords: Communication Strategies, Conceptualization, English as a Foreign Language, Interaction-Based Study, Language Proficiency.

INTRODUCTION

Since Hymes (1972)¹ introduced “the notion of communicative competence,” there have been notable shifts in how language is understood. Communicative competence emphasizes learners’ capacity to utilize language in conversation successfully. Canale and Swain (1980)² further developed this perspective by introducing the concept of ‘strategic competence’ as a constituent of communicative competence.³ Strategic competence is the capacity to effectively apply communication strategies (CSs) to navigate real communicative situations and maintain open communication channels.^{4,5} This term is defined as “the ability to cope in an authentic communicative situation and to keep the communicative channel open”^{6,7}. Consequently, examining learners’ capacity to use CSs demonstrates their strategic proficiency.

Furthermore, numerous studies were conducted “in various contexts to investigate the influence of multiple factors, such as proficiency level, gender, personality, cultural issues, and strategy training, on the utilization of CSs. These studies aimed to establish a systematic definition and classification of the concept.” Research that examines the impact of language competence is crucial since it uncovers how improving English skills affects learners’ capacity to overcome communication difficulties. Although there is a prevailing inclination to study “this issue empirically, the connection between language proficiency and the use of CSs remains uncertain”⁸. The primary focus of this research is to examine how Indian students studying English as a foreign language at the university level handle communication difficulties during discussions.” Additionally, the study aims to determine if the students’ competence degree influences their communication strategy usage.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Define Communication Strategies

CSs may be conceptualized using two “primary approaches: the ‘psychological’ approach and the ‘interactional’ approach.” According to the “psychological” perspective, which emphasizes the role of the individual’s mental processes in communication,⁹⁻¹⁵ CSs are “strategies which a language user employs to achieve his intended meaning on becoming aware of problems arising during the planning phase of an utterance due to (his own) linguistic shortcomings.”¹⁶ When studying CSs, this perspective emphasizes the need to comprehend cognitive elements. As an illustration of the importance of “negotiation of meaning in communication, the interactional” approach¹⁷ highlights the interactive aspect of employing CSs.¹⁸ “CSs are seen as tools used in a joint negotiation of meaning where both interlocutors are attempting to agree as to a communicative goal”¹⁹ is how interactionalists conceptualize communication strategies (CSs) within the framework of the social interactional perspective.²⁰ Research on communication systems employing an interaction approach aims to detect the interaction between speakers. Both of these methodologies are worthy of consideration when studying communication systems since communication is inherently individual and interactive. CSs might be seen as having personal and mutual features rather than being distinguished separately. This occurs because, “during communication, the speaker and the interlocutor engage in cognitive processes” primarily influenced by their relationship. Hence, this research examines both the interactive and mental elements of CSs.

The problem-solving function of communication strategies is a well-discussed feature when describing CSs.²¹ This is based on the belief that individuals use tactics only when they recognize a potential issue that might disrupt communication.²² Nevertheless, as Canale (1983)²³ has highlighted, CSs may also function as non-problem-solving techniques, serving to “improve the efficiency of communication.” This indicates speakers might use CSs to clarify or provide more details about their intended message. Based on this, it is possible to see CSs as message enhancers²⁴.

Awareness is a frequently debated topic when defining CSs, with differing perspectives in the literature about the amount of awareness of speakers while employing CSs. “According to Dörnyei and Scott (1997)²⁵, seeing CSs as deliberate efforts may pose difficulties because communication’s intricate and ever-changing nature necessitates prompt answers.” Therefore, some tactics may be implemented automatically, impeding speakers’ awareness.^{26,27} They argue that, rather than focusing on the degree of consciousness, it is essential to include the speaker’s ‘knowledge of the communication issue’ and ‘intentionality’ while studying CSs.

Categorizing Communication Strategies

Different taxonomies have been developed due to the divergent perspectives about the conceptualization of Communication Strategies outlined above. Before exploring the taxonomy used in the current research, it is essential to examine two significant taxonomies. Bialystok (1990) provided the first concept, which pertains to the “language source” of code-switching. The speaker categorized strategies associated with “the speaker’s native language as L1-based strategies (such as language switch, foreignizing, transliteration), strategies related to the target language as L2-based strategies (such as semantic contiguity, description, word coinage), and non-verbal strategies as non-linguistic strategies (such as gestures, mime).”

Faerch and Kasper (1983)²⁸ classify CSs into ‘reduction’ and ‘achievement’ techniques. Reduction tactics, which include techniques used to obstruct the intended

message (such as subject avoidance, message abandonment, and meaning substitution), indicate poor speaker performance²⁹. In contrast, accomplishment methods refer to the speaker's deliberate efforts to convey a message via the use of various communication techniques, such as 'code-switching,' 'inter-/intralingual transfer,' 'generalization,' 'paraphrase,' 'word coinage,' and 'restructuring.', such as

The current study utilizes "Dörnyei and Scott's taxonomy (1997)"³⁰, which presents a precise classification that considers both the interactive and cognitive aspects of communication strategies (CSs). It also examines the various functions of CSs, including their problem-solving, cognitive processing, and performance-oriented characteristics. The classifications of this taxonomy are shown in (Table 1).

"S. No.	Categories	Sub-Categories	Sample strategies
1	Direct Strategies	Resource deficit-related	Message reduction; circumlocution; approximation; code switching; mime; Self-rephrasing; self-repair; Other repairs
		Own performance problem-related	
		Other performance problem-related	
2	Interactional strategies	Interactional strategies	Appeals for help Comprehension check; own-accuracy check Asking for repetition, guessing, and responses
		Interactional strategies	
		Interactional strategies	
3	Indirect strategies	Processing time-pressure related	Use of fillers; repetitions Verbal strategy markers Feigning understanding"
		Own-performance problem related	
		Other performance problem-related	

"Table 1 presents the taxonomy comprising three primary categories: 'direct,' 'indirect,' and 'interactional techniques.' Direct methods are problem-oriented" and include techniques used to convey meaning effectively in a feasible and self-contained manner.³¹ Furthermore, indirect techniques do not primarily focus on addressing problems but instead facilitate the transmission of meaning by providing favorable communication circumstances, such as fillers and repeats. Thirdly, interactional tactics include collaborative techniques used by the speaker and the interlocutor, such as seeking assistance, verifying understanding, and requesting a repeat.

The categories are divided into three sub-categories, which are classified based on "the source of the issue: 'own-performance problem,' 'other performance problem,' 'resource shortage,' and 'processing time-pressure' associated techniques. 'Own-performance' problem-related strategies pertain to the difficulties encountered by the speaker, while 'other-performance' problem-related strategies focus on the communication issues faced by the interlocutor." The speaker uses explicit strategies connected to resource deficits to compensate for their lack of knowledge. 'Processing time-pressure' tactics refer to techniques "used to optimize time management in communication."

Communication Strategies Research

Language proficiency has been a significant topic of study when considering the elements that affect the "selection of communication strategies (CSs)." It is argued that less skilled learners are more likely to have difficulty communicating, so they should use a more

extensive variety of communication strategies. Nevertheless, prior research investigations have had mixed results.

Paribakth (1986)³² compared the usage of communication strategies by “intermediate and advanced English as a second language learners in Canada. The participants were instructed to do a concept-identification task that included engaging in oral communication with interlocutors who were native speakers of their language. The research discovered no disparities in the selection and frequency of communication strategies (CSs) between intermediate and advanced students”. SI-Qing (1990)^{33,34} performed “a study in the Chinese setting using a similar research approach. In this study, both highly proficient and low proficient English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners were instructed to convey two tangible and two abstract ideas with native speakers.” The results of the study contradicted Paribakth’s findings. It was observed that highly proficient learners used a significantly higher number of communication strategies (CSs), with a particular emphasis on linguistic-based CSs such as approximation, antonym, synonym, and ambiguity.

On the other hand, low-proficient learners tended to rely more on knowledge-based CSs like exemplification, comparison, and repetitions. Chuanchaisit and Prapphal (2009)³⁵ conducted quantitative research at a university in Thailand, which likewise identified disparities between learners with high and low proficiency levels. The study found that lower-proficiency students used risk-avoidance strategies, such as time-gaining. On the other hand, students with higher proficiency accepted risks “using strategies such as social-affective, fluency-oriented, assistance-seeking, and circumlocution. In contrast, Ting and Phan’s (2008) research did not find proficiency level to be a determining factor in using CSs. The approach used by both high and low-proficient learners did not differ in a simulated oral interaction assignment where they were required to address a social problem.” Moattarian (2012)³⁶ examined the strategic use of high school pupils at various levels of competence in the Iranian environment. The study identified no notable disparities between learners who were highly skilled and those who were less proficient.

The conflicting results indicate that the impact of language proficiency on the usage of CSs remains uncertain. Therefore, further investigation is required to comprehend the correlation “between proficiency level and the use of CSs. The major objective of this research was to examine how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners’ communication strategies at various competence levels differ in an interaction-based communicative task. This study also aims to depict the strategy repertoires of Indian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners and wants to find answers to the following research questions:”

1. What are the most often used communication strategies among Indian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners?
2. What distinguishes high and poor-proficiency learners in CS use?

METHODOLOGY

Over the last ten years, there has been an increasing amount of “research that uses quantitative” methodologies to study CSs. This research primarily aims to investigate the correlations among many aspects that influence the use of CSs.³⁷⁻⁴⁰ These investigations are valuable for uncovering the statistical relationships among many “factors that influence the choice of strategy.” However, the reliability of research conducted within a quantitative framework is still being determined since they only examine the application of methods from a narrow viewpoint and depend entirely on self-reports from learners. The current study used “an interaction-based research technique to create a communicative research environment to prevent this.” This technique emphasizes the conversational interactions of learners by changing the types of interactions they engage in. The goal is understanding how different

interaction components relate to second language acquisition.⁴¹ In addition, this study aims to comprehend the “mental processes that participants experience when using CSs.” Therefore, it is crucial to conduct introspective research where participants are requested to provide detailed explanations regarding their consciousness’s cognitive and emotional aspects.⁴² To do this, “stimulated recall interviews were conducted using video recordings and transcripts. Participants were then prompted to provide performance feedback.”⁴³

“Story-telling was used because it relied on “mutual understanding,” an essential aspect of ordinary communication. Two brief films from Viney & Viney’s (1987)⁴⁴ video book were chosen. The movies were selected” based on their inclusion of common everyday occurrences that individuals with limited language skills may discuss, namely, the introduction of key characters, preparations for a vacation, and events occurring at a campground. The movies were muted to prevent the participants from hearing specific dialogues of the characters, which may compromise the authenticity of the connection. The focus of this research did not include assessing participants’ capacity to articulate details about movies. Instead, these narratives were used as a method to facilitate communication. Participants were given no guidance and had complete autonomy over the communication process.

A total of “46 students were invited to attend the inaugural meeting, which aimed to provide information about the study topics. Students were instructed to peruse the consent form that discussed ethical concerns.” The individuals were guaranteed that their privacy would be protected and that the information would only be used for research objectives. A total of 25 pupils willingly offered to take part. Other students organized a separate gathering, “and 34 students, divided into seventeen pairs, consented to participate in the research. Before conducting the primary investigation, a preliminary study was conducted to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the research technique.” Based on the findings, required modifications were made to the primary research design.

“The participants were university students in Osmania University’s English Language” Teaching Department (ELT), Hyderabad, Telangana. The reason for selecting this department is that ELT departments are comprised of students with varying degrees of ability. Most students in ELT departments are female, which poses challenges in obtaining a homogeneous “sample in terms of gender and skill level. Consequently, all the individuals involved were female. The participants were categorized into two groups based on their degrees of proficiency.” “Highly proficient (HP)” learners referred to students in their last year, whereas low proficient (LP) pupils referred to kids in their first year. The reason for this was the distinct disparity in language performance between these two cohorts. While first-year students showed a high level of competence in the structural parts of English, their proficiency in communication skills was comparatively lower.

On the other hand, final-year students exhibited a high level of proficiency in communication skills. First-year students typically had an average age of around 21, while final-year students had an average age of roughly 24. The researchers used purposive sampling. LP participants were selected based on their Oral Communication Skills course test marks. The researcher witnessed the testing method. HP participants were chosen based on their presenting performances in several classes.

Procedure for Collecting Data

Participants were randomly matched and taught to negotiate over two distinct narratives. Each duo consisted of one narrator and one interlocutor. All participants were skilled since they were required to manage the communication process by asking the

storytellers pertinent questions. The group consisted of “nine pairs of highly skilled storytellers and eight pairs of low-skilled” storytellers.

The data-gathering method consisted of three components that spanned two days. Part 1 and Part 2 followed a similar process: storytellers watched two distinct movies and then recounted them to their conversation partners. Only those skilled in story-telling “participated in Part 3, during which stimulated recall interviews were carried out. The research methodology is shown in (Table 2).”

“Table 2 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE”		
1st Day	Part-1	The storyteller views the first movie twice.
		Preparation for describing the story
		The interlocutor enters the room.
		Communication
		The Storyteller leaves the room.
	Part-2	The interlocutor describes the story to the researcher.
		The storyteller views the second movie.
		Preparation for describing the story
		The interlocutor enters the room.
		Communication
2nd Day	Part-3	The storyteller leaves the room.
		The interlocutor describes the story to the researcher.
		Stimulated recall interview with storytellers.”

Source: Field study.

In Parts 1 and 2, the narrator saw each film on two separate occasions. Once the storyteller felt prepared to discuss “the movies, the interlocutor was welcomed into the room” and began conversing. The storytellers were required to provide comprehensive descriptions of the film, while the interlocutors were expected to comprehend the events to the fullest extent possible. After the story-telling concluded, the storyteller exited “the room, and the interlocutor recounted the tales to the researcher.” The researcher remained passive throughout the talk, refraining from participating or asking questions. This approach assumed that interlocutors may only fully participate in the discourse once prompted to clarify their understanding to a third party.

Only those who engage in the art of story-telling took part in Part 3. According to “Brown and Rodgers (2002),”⁴⁵ “time intervening between mental operations and report is critical and should be minimized as much as possible” in introspective research. Consequently, Part 3 was executed on the following day. Before conducting interviews, the researcher transcribed the conversation word for word and analyzed the communication strategies used to pose pertinent questions to the storytellers. The researcher observed the tale-telling process alongside the storytellers and requested their input on their specific communication behavior. Interrogatives were posed, such as ‘What was the rationale behind your statement?’, ‘What was the intended meaning of this?’ and ‘What emotions did you experience in this context?’ to bolster the examination of cognitive structures and comprehend the psychological processes participants undergo while using such structures. The interviews were conducted in Hyderabad, Telangana.

Two professionals examined the CS to guarantee the consistency of the data analysis amongst coders. They discovered a very significant correlation coefficient of 0.92 (Pearson's r) with a p -value of less than 0.001. "Content analysis was used to examine the resemblances and disparities among the participants. The non-parametric version of One-Way ANOVA, the Kruskal-Wallis test, was used to gauge participant performance at various competence levels (Field, 2009). A non-parametric test was conducted since no assumptions or further statistical analysis were made on the data's distribution."

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Frequency of Strategy Implementation

The data's descriptive analysis revealed that participants depended on certain approach types. Most of the techniques used in the research "were direct strategies, with indirect and interactional strategies following behind." Table 3 shows the breakdown of categories used.

"Category	Percentage (%)	Sub-Category	Percentage (%)
Direct Strategies	56.6	Own performance problem-related	23
		Resource deficit-related	33.1
		Other performance problem-related	0.5
Indirect Strategies	35.2	Own performance problem-related	--
		Processing time pressure-related	35.2
		Other performance problem-related	--
Interactional Strategies	8.2	Own performance problem-related	2
		Resource deficit-related strategies.	0.6
		Other performance problem-related	5.6"

The reliance on explicit techniques indicates that the primary motivation for deploying CSs was a deficiency in information. "This is because direct tactics contain techniques that allow speakers to address the deficiencies in their knowledge." Table 3 shows that most of the methods used in the research were "resource deficit-related strategies." This means that participants used these methods because they lacked the necessary skills in the target language⁴⁶ The research found that "own performance problem-related strategies" were another often used type of direct strategy. This suggests that the high frequency of direct strategies was due to the speakers' lack of understanding rather than the interlocutors'. Another widely favored category was 'strategies relating to time constraints during processing.' Stall tactics are used to extend a discussion⁴⁷. According to Zuniga et al. (2019)⁴⁸, relying on these tactics suggests that the speaker is not fluent. Most of the interactional techniques used in the research were categorized as 'other performance problem-related methods.' "This demonstrates that the participants mostly used interactional methods in response to communication difficulties arising from the interlocutor's execution or understanding of the intended message."

In addition to well-known strategy categories, studying particular CSs is essential since they provide insight into participants' strategy repertoires. According to the frequency analysis, 1,515 CSs were used in the study's participants' communication tactic. Remarkably, of the 40 distinct techniques, participants exclusively used just six strategies, accounting for 76.83% of the tactics implemented in the research. Paribakht (1986)⁴⁹ discovered that learners rely on specific tactics and fundamentally use the same

communication strategies. Table 4 presents the frequency distribution of popular techniques (Table 4).

“S. No.	Strategy	N	Frequency	%
1	Self-repair	17	207	13.7
2	Self-repetition	17	204	13.5
3	Use of Fillers	17	331	2.8
4	Approximation	17	133	8.7
5	Self-rephrase	17	147	9.7
6	Mime	17	141	9.2
	SUBTOTAL	17	1.164	76.83%
	TOTAL	17	1.515	100%

Source: Field Study.

Fillers were the most often used approach in this research. Dörnyei (1995)⁵⁰ refers to these tactics as ‘communication maintenance strategies.’ “These tactics do not indicate speakers’ lack of competency but are used when speakers need more interaction time.” Canale (1983)⁵¹ asserts that these methods are crucial for developing strategic competency, a necessary skill for sustaining a discourse. The participants in this research mostly used the word ‘err’ to occupy gaps in their *talks*.

“He’s body language edd drunk.” Student 1

“... she is a highly dynamic woman. I believe she appears to be actively engaged in athletic activities.” Student 11

Participants’ interview comments explaining the reasons for using the word ‘edd’ validated the purpose of using fillers.

“I attempted to express that ‘she has recently ceased participating in physical activity,’ but I could not articulate it. As a result, I say edd to give myself time to think about how to convey that term.” Student 12

“Self-repetition serves a purpose comparable to that of fillers. Instead of using non-lexicalized fillers, speakers repeat a word or phrase to fill gaps in talks.”⁵² The research found that the third most often used approach by participants was self-repetition. They frequently repeated their remarks, as seen in the example: *“And also while she is trying to example: “And also while she is trying to edd while she is trying.”* Student 14.

“The initial pair’s male individual seated in the dining establishment was unable to engage in the sport of tennis successfully in the sport of tennis.” Student 13

When questioned about the motives behind her repetition of statements, Student 14 acknowledged that she was contemplating her subsequent response. The participants’ reliance on techniques to save time indicates that acquiring “fluency is one of their primary communication demands. This is because proficient speakers do not engage in pauses and do not need to employ stalling techniques to occupy these intervals.”

The technique of self-repair ranked second in popularity. These tactics include self-initiated corrections⁵³ and speakers’ changed output⁵⁴ to rectify their utterances.

“There was a camping trip where they had a tent.” Student 1

“The girl desires to embark on a vacation.” Student 6

As seen before, upon recognizing the grammatical error, students promptly corrected their statement:

“Upon speaking the statement, I immediately recognized my grammatical error and proceeded to repeat the term in its right form.” Student 6

The implementation of self-repair demonstrates the learners’ capacity to check their performances. They were able to recognize their linguistic errors while speaking.

Nevertheless, the frequent use of self-repair indicates that students must cultivate precision in their speech to prevent making wrong statements.

The research also commonly used self-rephrasing, which involves repeating a word by adding something or paraphrasing it.⁵⁵ Participants used this method when they saw unclear aspects in their explanations:

“Then she observed the hairdresser showcasing her newly styled hair.” Student 3

“Subsequently, we encounter the individual, specifically the spouse.” Student 2

The quotations show that the speakers recognized the need for clarification and modified their statements. Student 3 made this statement:

“I believed that my partner may have been perplexed. Hence, it was necessary to clarify that she was the hairdresser.”

Mime was another well-liked CS. It entails using non-linguistic methods to bolster verbal communication.^{56,57} The research primarily used mime to communicate when the speaker had challenges remembering certain words. Participants effectively conveyed their “intended message by using nonverbal gestures and body movements.”

“The woman was an edd showing her hair hairdresser.” Student 5

“... and he says, ‘What are you doing here? Edd, look at his err laughing clock,”
Student 1

According to the speaker’s statement during the stimulated recall interview, Student 1 could not recall the word ‘watch’ and resolved this issue through nonverbal communication. The ultimate widely-used approach was ‘approximation.’ Like the utilization of mime in this investigation, approximation aims to provide alternative lexical items with semantic characteristics comparable to bolster verbal communication.⁵⁸ The research primarily used mime to communicate when the speaker had challenges that may effectively convey the desired meaning.

I asked, *“What’s his job?”*

“Wall drier” Student 10.

“And the man, edd, was attempting to construct a tent.” Student 8

“He can’t kick the ball and kicks it wrong.” Student 17

The interaction between Student 10 and her conversation partner demonstrates the use of approximation. Student 10 said that she couldn’t remember the term “wall painter” and instead used “wall drier” as a substitute word that may convey the desired meaning to her interlocutor. Similarly, Students 8 and 17 substituted other words for “put up” and “hit.”

The Impact of Proficiency Level on the Use of Communication Methods

According to the data in Table 5, no significant differences were seen between participants classified as high proficiency (HP) and low proficiency (LP) regarding their communication techniques. The p-value, which indicates the level of statistical significance, was more than 0.05. Compared to LP learners (f = 620), HP learners utilized more CSs (f = 895). This goes against the claim made by less proficient learners that because they have more communication difficulties, they use more CSs. Additionally, parallel studies found no significant difference in the frequency of CS use between LP and HP learners.

While the research did not show any variations in overall strategy use, it identified statistically significant variances in implementing three specific methods. The results are shown in Table 5.

Strategy	Group	N	Mean Rank	Ch- Square	df	Sig.
Message	Low	8	11.45	5.348	1	0.22

reduction	High	9	6.24			
Mime	Low	8	6.38	5.419	1	0.21
	High	9	11.95			
Topic Avoidance	Low	8	12.00	9.305	1	0.03
	High	9	5.64			
Total	Low	8	10.12	0.751	1	0.387
	High	9	8			

Source: Field study.

According to the data shown in Table 5, HP participants used the technique of ‘mime’ to a much higher extent than LP participants. On the other hand, LP students employed ‘message reduction’ and ‘subject avoidance’ more often.

By identifying the characteristics of these three techniques, we may determine the specific communication requirements of learners at various degrees of skill. Prior research has shown contradictory results about the correlation between proficiency and the use of ‘mime.’ Several studies have shown that low-proficiency (LP) learners rely on non-verbal communication, such as mime, more often than high-proficiency (HP) learners^{59,60}. In contrast, Si-Qing (1990)⁶¹ discovered that skilled learners had superior proficiency in using visual aids during communication. Chen suggests a connection between learners’ confidence and ability to utilize body language in talks. As learners improve their skills, they gain confidence, which allows them to feel at ease using non-verbal communication. This phenomenon was also seen in the current investigation, as subjects with LP exhibited infrequent use of nonverbal communication cues.

“HP learners deployed more CSs in this research because LP learners” utilized both ‘message reduction’ and ‘subject avoidance’ substantially more significantly. This occurred “because HP learners tried to describe the movies,” resulting in increased communication difficulties thoroughly. In contrast, learners with limited proficiency (LP) tended to refrain from participating in conversations and instead provided concise summaries of the critical events. Consequently, the average time it took for LP learners to complete the story-telling process was 9 minutes, which took HP learners 13 minutes.

The following excerpts exemplify instances of subject avoidance:

“And a client, a man, who didn’t like his work. Then, the erring pair decided to go and stay somewhere.” Student 10

“The painting guy attempts to study golf in a limited space and succeeds in playing the game. And that’s all.” Student 17

Despite being aware of other potential topics, Students 10 and 17 avoid Students discussing them to prevent possible communication issues. Their subsequent remarks affirmed their desire to conclude the discussion expeditiously: to

“Experiencing anxiety, I made an effort to limit the length of my communication. I was eager to finish the story-telling.”

The earlier research⁶² proved that LP learners rely more on avoidance tactics. Nakatani’s research in Japan showed that learners with lower proficiency (LP) reported using message abandonment techniques more often than learners with higher proficiency (HP). Research conducted by “Mei and Nathalang (2010) at a Chinese university found that low-proficiency (LP) learners depend on avoidance” tactics to a much greater extent than high-proficiency (HP) learners. The results of Chuanchaisit and Prapphal’s (2013) research done in Thailand support this conclusion, indicating that high proficiency (HP) learners tend to use a more significant number of risk-taking methods compared to low proficiency (LP) learners. According to Nakatani, the reliance of LP learners on avoidance strategies is connected to their low self-confidence. When they realize “they cannot achieve their communication objective, the learner may opt to avoid the problem, using reduction strategies.”⁶³This is

“possibly the primary reason LP learners” chose not to provide detailed descriptions of the movies in the current research.

IMPLEMENTATION

The findings of this research indicate that Indian “learners of English as a foreign language” possess a restricted range of communication techniques and depend on specific approaches to address difficulties in communication. This might be attributed to the learners’ educational background since they may lack opportunities to employ various communication strategies actively. To address this issue, it is necessary to use effective instructional strategies in the classroom. According to Si-Qing, these strategies should enable learners to develop a comprehensive understanding of the various communication strategies (CSs) and give opportunities for them to practice using CSs to solve diverse communication challenges. (1990), teachers should refrain from using highly organized activities and instead strive to create genuine communicative settings for students to encounter communication difficulties. This will likely enhance students’ proficiency in using CSs, enabling the development of their strategic competence.

Common approaches suggest the specific requirements of learners in terms of communication. The research primarily focused on tactics to address speakers’ limited proficiency in English. Participants often relied on code-switching, mainly to buy time during interactions. In addition, the participants frequently revised their statements and believed further clarification was necessary to elucidate their reasons. Curriculum designers and instructors should prioritize addressing these challenges and construct lessons that enhance learners’ speaking accuracy and fluency.

This research demonstrated that the level of proficiency does not play a role in determining the selection of CSs. This statement corroborates “Dörnyei’s proposition (1995) that communication strategies may be taught to both low-proficiency (LP) learners and high-proficiency (HP) learners. This disconnection contradicts the premise that less skilled learners encounter a more significant number of communication difficulties” and, as a result, rely more heavily on communication strategies. In contrast, learners with limited proficiency (LP) actively avoid participating “in communication by using avoidance strategies, resulting in reduced use of communication strategies (Chen, 1990).” Conversely, those who engage in high proficiency (HP) learning are willing to take risks, which necessitates dealing with more communication difficulties. Avoidance techniques, seen as negative speaker behavior, impede the practice of English. Nevertheless, to enhance their proficiency in communication strategies, learners must use techniques that allow them to sustain their participation in conversations⁶⁴. Hence, rather than “avoiding or diminishing the intended message, learners should be motivated to embrace risks to use English” in a communicative manner and capitalize on the chances to practice speaking the language.

CONCLUSION

The current research had two main objectives: “(a) to analyze the familiar CSs used by Indian EFL learners and (b) to determine the influence of proficiency level on the usage of CSs.” Indian EFL learners have a limited range of communication strategies (CS) as they heavily rely on only six strategies. These strategies include using CS to buy time during conversations, correcting structural errors in their speech, clarifying ambiguous points, utilizing visual aids, and substituting words when they cannot remember the specific vocabulary item they intended to use. This research also showed that the proficiency level does not influence the selection of CSs. Nevertheless, notable disparities were seen in

using three communication strategies: LP learners mostly employ avoidance tactics, while HP learners demonstrate more proficient use of nonverbal cues.

While it is not feasible for a research study to replicate a genuine communication environment, this study closely resembles it by creating a communicative research setting. However, several limitations in the study design need to be acknowledged and resolved. The data-gathering technique may have impeded “some communication strategies, such as code-switching, pretending comprehension, and muttering.” The reduced reliance on interactional tactics may be attributed to the participants’ rapport with their interlocutors. The research was conducted at a particular institution and only included female students. The individuals involved in the activity had completed their studies and had a high proficiency in English. Consequently, the conclusions cannot be applied to various situations and individuals with varying degrees of expertise. The research did not address the efficacy of communication strategies used. To get a deeper comprehension of the idea, it is necessary to do more study in various situations, with a specific emphasis on distinct components of CSs, such as strategy training and the efficacy of CSs.

END NOTES

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