



EFL Teachers' and Students' Perceptions about Communication Strategies Teachability

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Abstract

The current study examined the Iranian EFL teachers' and students' perceptions about Communication Strategies Teachability. The study was conducted with 20 teachers and 110 students from universities and private language Institutes in Tabriz, Iran. The literature regarding the teachability of communication strategies (CSs) has been far from conclusive. Some researchers reject the possibility of CSs instruction while many empirical studies support their teachability. Taking a mixed method design, the present study used a language proficiency test, a questionnaire and an interview for data collection. In the quantitative phase, the participants' responses to questionnaire before and after a 12-week period of teaching CSs were statistically compared. The analysis of the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire through Paired-samples t-test indicated that the students' perceptions towards the usefulness of CSs grew significantly more positive after their instruction. The qualitative analysis of the interview data collected from the teachers indicated that most teachers found CSs useful and possible to teach. It was also found that these strategies improved capability of English language learners to speak and enhanced their consciousness of CSs. This study could offer pedagogical implications for both teachers and students and pave the way for further studies in the field.

Keywords: communication strategies, perception, teaching CSs, Iranian EFL learners' perceptions, teachability

Introduction

The modes in which interlocutors struggle to overcome the gap between what they desire to interact with and their instantly accessible linguistic resources are named as communication strategies (Maleki, 2007). The concept of CSs was first invented by Selinker (1972, p. 220) in the original article on “Interlanguage”. Corder (1983) accepts that it was Varadi who was the first person to examine CSs experimentally. Selinker (1972) included “the communication strategies as one of the five main processes in foreign language acquisition” (p. 229). Communication strategies (CSs), also called as ‘communicative strategies’ (Corder, 1983), ‘communicational strategies’ (Váradi, 1973), ‘compensation strategies’ (Harding, 1983), and ‘compensatory strategies’ (Poullisse, Bongaerts, & Kellerman, 1990) became popular with the manifestation of communicative competence and the change of focus from language acting like a separate linguistic phenomenon to language functioning like communication (Hymes, 1972). Over the past two decades, the process of training CSs through classroom teachers has converted the learning process from traditional to modern methods that increases real-life communication.

In spite of the fact that there is no consensus among researchers about the exact definition, communication strategies have been usually described as the tools that students use to solve their communication problems. As Stern (1983) states “CSs are methods of dealing with problems in communicating in an imperfectly known second or foreign language”. CSs may aid students increase their confidence and take risks when speaking in a target language.

The original focus of why CSs have attracted the attention of teachers and students is that CSs affect all interaction activities. EFL teachers must decide daily about, what CSs they should teach, and how and to whom they should be taught. Barkhuizen (1998) argued that teachers need to understand learners’ emotions and beliefs about their CS learning experiences and consequently rethink and sometimes even modify their own teaching activities. Because of the importance of teachers’ and students’ beliefs, Ertmer (2005) presented a general review of teachers’ and students’ beliefs as the first essential step.

Most EFL students face communication difficulties while they endeavor to speak in the L2. One tactic to overcome the difficulties is using helpful strategies. Thus, L2 learners can benefit from teaching CSs to use them effectively. In Iran, students with more than 6 years of English language learning experience do not yet have basic communication skills and desired competency (Moradi, 1996; Rahimi, 1996). A large number of students are unwilling to speak English since they fear of making mistakes due to their shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence, lack of linguistic knowledge and low proficiency. Few students attempt to speak English in their classroom conversations whereas others are silent and tell, "I don't know", or speak in their L1. Repeatedly experiencing this type of situation, the students slowly lose their motivation to learn English, and eventually become frustrated.

In most of the classrooms, it is the teacher who speaks and the students are just listeners and do not react. So, the way of communication between students and teachers is worthless due to the one-way communication from the high-level teacher and the students' unwillingness to interrupt this kind of communication (Hofstede, 1997). Even though meaningful and fluent communication is the final goal of EFL students, they still deal with many difficulties in their interactions that prevent them from participating in class discussions. Indeed, the problem is that students cannot say exactly what they want, hence, it seems their message was not delivered or sent to the listener. CSs training can be a remedy for this trouble and not only boost students' communication skills, but also enhance their interests and reduce their fear, and can clear the way for optimizing outcomes and success in EFL learning.

CSs have been categorized variously in studies (e.g., Dornyei & Scott, 1995; Færch & Kasper, 1983; Tarone, 1977) and many researchers have tried to categorize them in various taxonomies. Kongsom's (2016) classification, adopted in the existing research, depends on the method of problem management and consists of five main categories of CSs including problem self-solving, interactional, time-consuming, non-taught, and non-verbal strategies.

Over the past four decades, a number of studies have been carried out to explore different issues related to CSs. One of these studies has been about

the teachability of CSs. The review of the related literature on the issue of CSs teachability showed that teaching CSs has been controversial over the last decades. While some discussions reject the feasibility of CSs instruction, many empirical studies support their teachability. The question whether CSs should be taught or not divides researchers into two groups. Tarone and Yule (1999) labelled these two groups as “Cons” and “Pros” which have different views on this matter. Cons view CSs as “perceived [...] to be essentially cognitive processes and that teaching them would amount to an attempt to teach cognitive processing” (p. 28). They consider teaching CSs to be unnecessary and impossible. A number of researchers adhered that, strategic skill expands in the talker first language and is easily transmissible to L2 usage (Bongaerts & Poulisse, 1989; Bongaerts, Kellerman & Bentlage, 1987; Paribakht, 1985). They argue that “L1 and L2 CSs are similar and should not be taught in the L2 because they already exist in the L1” (Tarone & Yule, 1999, p. 21) and the same mental processes are involved (p. 24). This means that most adult language students already have a relatively advanced level of competency, which includes a list of usable CSs, regardless of their level of proficiency in L2 (Bialystok & Kellerman, 1987). So, if there is no new linguistic knowledge involved and the transfer of cognitive processes from L1 is normal, then what is the training of these strategies?

Researchers in favor of teaching CSs, entitled ‘Pros’ by Tarone and Yule, have carried out several studies on the teachability of CSs, and have shown that CS teaching is both possible and desirable (Dörnyei, 1995, p. 61; Tarone & Yule, 1999, p. 29; Faucette, 2001, p. 10). They criticize the Cons for the lack of attention to the linguistic differences between L1 and L2 CSs (Tarone & Yule, 1999, p. 22) and ignored the fact that “some CSs are more useful and beneficial than others” (p. 24). This opinion may have forgotten the point that L1 communication problems are very different from the problems of foreign language to think transmission. It means that, foreign language spokespersons do not always have the same communication problems similar to L1. In addition, interlocutors of mother tongue must be specialized in their native speech, at the very least in speech skills. Despite what has been said before, a number of CSs can be transferred from the L1, i.e., pause fillers and hesitation devices, facial expression, and self-repair

strategies. For example, the use of fillers had an affirmative influence on the speech rate and students had positive perceptions towards their teaching, without paying attention of their degree of skill (p. 78), implying in Dörnyei's interpretation that CSs should be taught from early years. However, there are a great deal of L2 based CSs that are not being transferable and therefore, require training, i.e. paraphrasing, dialogs, and approximation (Lam, 2006; Rossiter, 2003).

The second criticism of CSs proponents is the view of Canale and Swain (1980) who argue that CSs are most likely to be achieved in actual conversation and not developed in class. Manchon (1999) in response stated that learning CSs will help the students to bridge the gap between classroom and actual communication and, as a result of teaching, an increase in the use of CSs will enhance and help to the student's security, self-confidence (especially that of low achievers) and motivation to communicate (Manchon, 1999, p. 20; Gallagher Brett, 2001, p. 54), a point that is supported by studies as well, such as the one by Cohen, Weaver & Li (1995).

The evidence shows that, it is beneficial for the teachers to use CS in their classrooms. This allows students to apply CS when speaking to each other and with their teacher, it provides a chance for reaction and learning the language more fluently. That's why the use of CS in the learning of language as a strategy is one of the controversial issues in the historical context of language teaching.

Perception is described as a state of mind that contains thoughts and attitudes and is admitted as a key notion to recognize individual performance because it creates our experience of the world around us; it allows every person to act within this environment and perceive the world and approach life problems differently. Dyers and Abongdia (2010) point out that perception is rooted in one's experience, thoughts, feelings and also personal reactions. Teachers' and students' private perceptions about teaching CSs may not be validated by empirical or scientific evidence or may not be completely predictable. The operational definition of perception that is commonly accepted among researchers is Weber's (1992) definition "an evaluative reaction - a decision about whether a person enjoys or hates -

from an individual, incident or other form of the environment” (p. 117). Therefore, it is possible for a person to see what perceptions or attitudes teachers hold towards each strategy by observing students’ feedbacks and assessments.

Several studies have already been carried out in the field, for example, Maleki (2007) conducted a study to explore the effectiveness of the teaching of CSs. He divided a group of 60 students into two groups. One class was taught using a communication strategy book and the other class without this instruction. After a four-month teaching course, he invited both classes to take oral and written tests and compared the results. The statistical results revealed that the teaching of CSs is pedagogically effective and language teaching materials which contain CSs were more effective than those without them. However, after receiving the strategy instruction, from the among nine communication strategies, participants in the study seldom used nonverbal signals and instead adopted those L2-based strategies more often, such as “appeal for assistance” and “circumlocution”, or in other words, eight strategies have positive differences, while only one strategy of “nonverbal signals” was applied much more often in the pre-test.

Moazen, Kafipour, and Soori (2016) made an investigation about Iranian EFL Learners’ perception about the application of CSs in their English learning endeavors. The research was further focused to understand whether gender had an impact on students’ perceptions of using CSs. In order to do this, the researchers selected 60 learners and separated them into two groups, control and experimental group. Each group consisted of 30 students. Dornyei and Scott’s (1997) list of CSs was applied by researcher, which was a self-report questionnaire. Following analyzing data by performing a t-test, it was identified that CSs training had remarkably influenced perception of the language students who stated more repeated use of CSs. In addition, data analyzed by using a Chi-square analysis showed that females performed better than males in the utilization of the CSs, without attention to the training they gained. The results supported the teachability of CSs showing that teaching CSs to students of the English language, mainly to males, is required. Actually, it can assist the male students to communicate more appropriately with their partners and educators and increase their learning.

In addition, Namaziandost, Ehsan, Imani, Ava (2020) examined the effects of Self-Repetition and Comprehension Check Strategies on Iranian students' speaking fluency. To find out their English proficiency level, the researcher administered the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) to 140 Iranian EFL learners. The researcher opted 90 intermediate students and separated them intentionally into two experimental groups; Self-Repetition group (n=30) and Comprehension Check group (n=30). Pretest was performed on both groups and each experimental group was trained by a particular compensatory strategy. In contrast, the control group gained traditional tasks in learning to master speech and speaking fluency. Finally, a posttest was performed. One-way ANOVA results showed that both experimental groups performed better in the post-test than in the pre-test. The results indicated that Self-Repetition and Comprehension Check strategies were useful, as displayed through the post-test score, which was importantly higher compared to their pre-test score. Both of these strategies enhanced students' speaking fluency. In the same line of research and in order to bridge the gap in the literature, this study has tried to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Does teaching CSs have any effect on the Iranian EFL students' perceptions towards the teachability and usefulness of communication strategies?

RQ2: To what extent, can teaching of CSs improve students' speaking abilities according to teachers' views.

Method

Participants

The participants included 26 EFL teachers who were invited by the researcher to participate in the study. The invitations were done personally by the researcher through telephone call, e-mail, and in person. The teachers were fully informed of the researcher's intention and objectives in doing the research. Of the 26 teachers, 20 (7 males and 13 females) finally accepted to cooperate and help the researcher to collect the data. The teachers had all more than five years teaching experience in communication classes both at university and private language institutes in Tabriz, Iran. The age range of

the teachers was from 30 to 48 years. Also, a group of 110 EFL learners (55 males and 55 females) who studied in the pre-intermediate level, in three universities and a private language institute was the sample from which the data were collected. Students' age ranged from 17 to 32, and were taught by participating teachers of the present study.

Instrumentation

1. Preliminary English Test (PET): Preliminary English test (PET) produced by the Cambridge ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) for the pre-intermediate students were administered to test their homogeneity. The test had four parts. The reading section consists of 35 questions organized in five parts including matching, multiple-choice and fill in the blank forms with a total score of 35. Writing section had three types of items with a total score of 25. The listening section consisted of 25 tests, and speaking section included a picture description task with a total score of 25. Due to limitations in administration and practicality considerations, only the first section was administered to the initial group of 153 participants in order to examine their general language proficiency.

2. A Modified Questionnaire: A questionnaire was used to explore students' perceptions of whether CSs can be teachable and useful. The questionnaire was made in accordance with Nakatani's (2006) Oral Communication Strategy Index (OCSI), Hamid's (2014) adapted version of Lam's (2006) Strategy Questionnaire, Alahmed's (2017) Strategy Questionnaire, and a Questionnaire about Communication Strategy of Kongsom's (2016). The questionnaire was designed with 29 items of five-point Likert Scale and one free-response item. The items of the questionnaire, based on Kongsom's (2016) taxonomy, targeted 11 communication strategies. The CSs included, according to Alahmed (2017) scale, could be summarized into five general classifications of CSs, including positive self-solving, interactional strategies, time-gaining, non-taught, and non-linguistic strategies. The only free-response item asked the students' ideas about which strategies they found more practical and useful.

The reliability of the questionnaire was examined based on the results of a pilot administration of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) was calculated for the items in five scales to examine whether CSs at any scale belonged to that category. According to George

and Mallery (2003), the acceptable level for Cronbach Alpha test is above .70. The values for all five groups of CSs were found to be more than .70 indicating the internal consistency of the questions in each group. Validity of the questionnaire was examined through views of experts whose comments were all integrated and the final version of the questionnaire was formulated.

3. Structured interview: The instrument which was used in the qualitative phase of the current research was a structured interview which was developed by the researcher and administered to teacher participants of the study. According to Denscombe (2003) interview is a suitable mode to get accurate and detailed information about facts, emotions, experiences as well as looking at sensitive aspects. In the present study the researcher used a structured free-response interview to explore the teacher participants' perceptions and beliefs about the teachability of CS.

The interview had six free response questions and was given to the teacher participants in written form to which the teachers were required to give complete written answers, so the teachers had a chance to comment and provide their opinion. The questions were in English and asked about the teachers' ideas and beliefs about the possibility of teaching CSs, their usefulness, and activities needed to teach them. One of the questions also asked the teachers' views toward the effectiveness of training certain strategies on their students' speech performances.

Procedure

The study began in Fall 2019 by requesting the teacher participants to administer the proficiency test and the questionnaire to their classes in the subsequent term and integrate the teaching of selected CSs (such as, approximation, circumlocution, use of all-purpose words, appeal for help, clarification request, pause fillers and hesitation devices, topic avoidance, comprehension check, confirmation check(or asking for confirmation), self-repair, and gesture & facial expression) in their conversation classes as part of their teaching syllabus. The questionnaire had to be administered at the beginning of the term, before teaching the CSs, as pretest and at the end of the term, after teaching the CSs, as the post test. The teachers were also required to answer the interview questions at the end of the term.

After the beginning of the term, the English proficiency test was administered to the students in several classes that were being taught by the participant teachers. The next step was the administration of the questionnaires to the selected participants by the teachers in their classes. The questionnaires were distributed among the students by the teachers who informed them of the purpose of the survey and assured them of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. The surveys were done in a part of normal class time and it took about 26 minutes in average to complete them. The CSs questionnaires were given to the selected participants by the teacher participants in different classes. The questionnaire had 30 items from which 29 items were closed-ended and selection type with five responses in Likert Scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' that carried one point to 'strongly agree' that carried 5 points. So, the score range of the questionnaire was 29 to 145. The last item in the questionnaire was open-ended and production type with only one item (item 30), or in the form of a free response question to which the participants had to give a written answer.

After the pretest of the questionnaire, the treatment phase began during which the teachers were required to train the students in their classes how to use communication strategies in their speaking activities. The treatment was performed over 12 weeks (in weekly one-hour lessons, totaling 60 minutes) in accordance with the techniques and concepts of strategy instruction cycle presented by Kongsom (2016), Dornyei (1995); Scarcella (1990); Dornyei and Thurrell (1991); Ogane (1998); Bygate (1987). At the end of the term and after 12 weeks of CSs instruction, students took the post-test.

After treatment, towards the end of the term, the questionnaire was given to the participants, as the posttest, to elicit their perceptions towards the teachability and usefulness of CSs in their classes during the one-term period. The posttest scores were statistically compared with the pretest scores.

The teachers were also required to answer the open-ended questions in the written interview which was used to elicit their attitudes towards the usefulness and teachability of the CSs and issues in their teaching process. Meanwhile, the teachers' responses were used to find out the perceived

usefulness of teaching specific CSs in improving students' speaking abilities.

Design

The research employed a mixed method design. Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered through student questionnaire and teacher interview. In the quantitative phase, students responded to the questionnaire and in the qualitative phase, teachers participated in the structured written interview. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) discuss that anytime scholars apply mixed-methods in their study procedures, they improve awareness of the phenomena, achieve various perspectives about the issue, and evaluate the credibility of outcomes resulted from a study. The research variables were learners' and teachers' perceptions towards teachability and usefulness of CSs.

Results

At the beginning of the study, an English proficiency test known as Preliminary English Test (PET) was performed to students who had accepted to participate in the research. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the scores collected from 153 test takers.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for English Proficiency Test Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PET	153	10	35	24.69	6.167
Valid N (listwise)	153				

As can be seen in Table 1, the mean score of the group was 24.69 and the SD was 6.16. In order to choose a homogeneous sample with regard to general English proficiency, we selected those students who had got scores within the range of one SD below and above the mean. Accordingly, the students who had scores between 18.5 and 31 were chosen as the model on which the experimental study was carried out.

The questionnaire was administered both before and after CSs teaching as a pre-test and post test, respectively, of the participants' perceptions towards teachability and usefulness of CSs. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the scores obtained from the pretest and post-test administration of the questionnaire.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Participants' Perceptions

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	pretest	88.47	110	22.547	2.150
	posttest	108.97	110	19.908	1.898

As it is seen in Table 2, the results of the students' perceptions to the teachability and usefulness of CSs were 88.47 and 108.97, respectively. The significance of the difference between pretest and post-test perception scores was examined through Paired-samples t-test. The normality of the scores distributions obtained from both pretest and posttest of the CS questionnaire had to be checked as a prerequisite to run Paired-samples t-test which is a parametric test of comparing two means of the same group. For this purpose, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K.S.) test of normality was run. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Results of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality of the Distributions

		pretest	posttest
N		110	110
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	88.47	108.97
	Std. Deviation	22.547	19.908
	Absolute	.077	.073
Most Extreme Differences	Positive	.077	.049
	Negative	-.046	-.073
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.807	.763
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.533	.605

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

The p-values observed for both pretest and post-test scores (.533 and .605) were above the alpha level of significance (.05) showing that the normality hypothesis could be confirmed and it was legitimate to use parametric inferential statistics to compare the two means obtained from pretest and post-test. Table 4 shows the results of the comparison by Paired-samples t-test.

Table 4
Results of Paired-Samples t-test; Comparing Pretest & Posttest Perceptions and Mean Scores

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pairpretest 1 posttest	-20.500	9.351	.892	-22.267	-18.733	-22.992	109	.000

As shown in Table 4, the p-value observed for the t-test was below the alpha level of significance (.05) showing that the null hypothesis of no difference between two means could be rejected and the difference between two mean scores was statistically significant. The outcomes of the data analysis indicated that the participants’ perceptions significantly increased after making them aware of the teachability and helpfulness of these strategies. Accordingly, the answer to the first research question that asked if the instruction of particular CSs had any effect on the Iranian EFL students’ perceptions towards the teachability and usefulness of communication strategies was affirmative. Based on the statistical analysis, teaching specific CSs have positive effect on the Iranian EFL students’ perceptions towards the teachability and usefulness of communication strategies.

The second research question, which asked whether the students’ speaking performance could improve after CSs instruction from the view of teachers, was investigated by analyzing the teacher participants’ written responses to one of the questions in the written interview that asked “do you believe that teaching CSs in EFL classes can improve the learners’ speaking abilities?”

The findings of the interview questions revealed a correspondence between the instruction and the advancement in students’ speaking abilities. The qualitative analysis of the teachers’ interview data indicated that most teachers found CSs useful and possible to teach. From the view of interviewees, teaching CSs are effective way which help students to communicate in English language in order to overcome speaking complex process and deficiencies and improve students’ oral communication. “Speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and competence in speaking takes a long time to develop” (Alderson & Bachman, 2004, p. ix). Therefore, instruction of CSs assist learners to develop realization of applying CS together with realization of knowledge of language skills and reinforced an affirmative perception about the teaching of CS. It was also found that CSs enhanced English language students’ ability to speak, gave

them new speaking tactics, raised their awareness of CSs and provided them with a sense of security to use these strategies in real-life situation. Researchers like Dörnyei (1995), Lam (2007), Nakatani (2005), Sato (2005), Tavakoli, Dastjerdi, & Esteki, (2011) have shown that strategic training assists interlocutores to raise their knowledge and abilities of communication strategies and become independent speakers. These issues have probably led students to improve their oral communication performance.

Discussion

The findings obtained from the statistical data analysis offered that teaching specified CSs led to greater use of the taught CSs and its usefulness. This increase in use is likely due to the fact that teaching CSs specifically stimulated students to employ such strategies in conversation and helped them to raise their awareness of these 11 CSs. These findings coincided with those of the research done by Bejarano and his colleagues (1997) which concluded that students who learned these strategies experienced more confidence while they continued to speak the English language. By CSs employment, learners were capable to send the meaning more appropriately, enhance their speech fluency, develop language knowledge, and earn more assurance. All the students found these strategies positive and useful. In line with this, other researchers (e.g., Nakatani, 2005; Le, 2006; Faerch and Kasper 1986) stated that the CSs were very useful in helping students when they faced communication difficulties.

Almost all of the teacher participants who were interviewed replied affirmatively whenever requested about the influence of CS instruction on students' capability to speak. They agreed that CSs instruction improved students' conversational skills or their oral communication performance in a variety of ways. Teachers gave their students more opportunities to gain experience and achievement in speaking by the use of new techniques in order to gain more confidence in English conversation, solve the communication problems and avoid interruptions, speak English fluently and permanently and have the possibility to practice speaking and employing the taught CSs in their classes. Student population conveyed all eleven taught CSs to their utterance whenever speaking English after they were instructed for a 12-week period of treatment. Thus, they had learned

some speaking tactics and this teaching increased their English awareness. The instruction could increase students' feeling of security and self-confidence while they attempted to speak with their interlanguage sources.

Empirical studies clearly advocate that, CSs have a positive impact on communication and language learning. For example, Ruba Fahmi Bataineh, Al-Bzour, and Baniabdelrahman (2017) accomplished an analyze about "on the teachability of communication strategies to Jordanian EFL beginners: exploration and reflection". They examined the effect of CS instruction on Jordanian EFL sixth-grade students' oral performance and strategy use. Following a thorough content analysis of units 10-13 of the prescribed *Action Pack* textbook, the instructional material was designed and implemented over a duration of eight weeks. A three-task oral pre-/post-test, a communication strategies-based observation checklist, and a 10-item scoring rubric were used to collect data from a purposeful sample of 24 sixth-grade students. The data analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, suggested that the utilization of communication strategies in language instruction both improves oral performance and increases strategy use. The findings revealed that instruction improved not only the participants' oral performance but also their CS use over the course of the treatment.

Huang (2010) discussed that with the development of students' fruitful communication, teachers need to prioritize empowering their students and reinforcing these learners for conversation away from the class. Overall, the analysis of students' perceptions revealed that shifting attention towards listening and speaking skills and practice oral tasks not only creates conditions which help learners to participate in oral activities eagerly and successfully, but also push them to use communication strategies and explicitly highlight their utility. Some learners stated that training CSs increased their fluency, provided them self-assurance and good opportunity to practice these strategies for their English speaking during first semester, extended their English insight and assisted them understand the meaning.

Therefore, teachers considered that teaching CSs had positive effects in contributing pre-intermediate learners overcome communication failures and improve their speaking abilities, strengthen their interplays, and expand their language learning as a whole.

The comments of the teachers highly indicated that CSs training and the next application of them in the speech activities supported students to be sure in monitoring and maintaining the trend of the conversation. It helped language students to take risks. Teachers commented that their students' reactions to the speaking English showed that their CSs instruction increased their knowledge about employing the instructed CSs. Therefore, it seems that teachers found that the instruction program had remarkably suggested on students' true utility of communication strategies. Teachers feedbacks suggested that the training CSs played positive roles in improving students speaking abilities and provide a novel technique in teaching and acquisition that is welcomed with individual learners. This is a persuasion for teachers to alter their traditional and old-fashioned methods to the novel training.

The current study provided significant evidence that CSs are teachable and strategy instruction can be useful in supporting and developing students' CS. The results further confirmed that these findings were generally consistent with earlier studies in that CSs instruction had positive effects in raising awareness and confidence in CSs and in improving students speaking abilities (Raba'ah, 2016; Bataineh, Al-Bzour, & Baniabdelrahman, 2017).

As stated by Oxford (1990), students' awareness of CSs assists them employ these strategies more purposely and regularly. Dörnyei (1995) offers that communication strategies require to be taught and she further suggests procedures for strategy training. Dörnyei discusses that teachers should raise students' awareness, stimulate them to take risks, and provide them with models and chances to use communication strategies.

The present study had some theoretical as well as pedagogical implications. Theoretically, the study lent further support to the previous studies that had already confirmed the need to teach and practice communication strategies in EFL classes. On pedagogical grounds, the study could send positive signals to those who are concerned with the area of EFL education. Instructors should be encouraged to make their students use strategies to overcome their speaking problems and take risks to participate in communication opportunities both in and out of the

classrooms. Syllabus designers should aim at developing lessons that focus on the use of strategies in all phases of the teaching process.

The present study suffered from some limitations. With regard to the fact that the members of this research were pre-intermediate learners of English, it is offered that similar studies be conducted with students of different language proficiency levels. Based on the constraints of time, the CSs training of this research adopted Tiwaporn's (2016) taxonomy and took only 12 weeks (a semester) and the session longed 60 minutes for each CS. Therefore, more time of CS instruction is required in forthcoming studies since variations in the learners' strategic ability can be better examined in a longitudinal research. In addition, regarding the difficulty in measuring features of oral speech, interviewing students and testing their oral communication performance was excluded because it was practically impossible to test the speaking abilities of a large number of students from different classes in time limitations. Furthermore, transcribing and coding the learners' oral performance and conducting all interviews in the same day were difficult and impossible. Nevertheless, further studies with a small group of students are needed to gain other valuable insights from research to measure students' speaking ability or oral communication performance.

Declaration of interest: none

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