

Exploring the Impact of Explicit Instruction of Communication Strategies on Speaking Fluency: A Study on Lower Intermediate Iranian Female EFL Learners

Afshin Soori*¹

Assistant professor, Department of English Language, Larestan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Larestan, Iran

afshin_soori@yahoo.com

0000-0003-300-216x

Ali Akbar Zamani²

Assistant professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran

Aliakbarzamani77@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the effect of communication strategies (CSs) on Iranian female EFL learners' speaking fluency. Secondly, the research attempted to clarify which of the employed CSs have been utilized by Iranian female EFL learners in this study more than other strategies in speaking in English. A quasi-experimental design was employed in this study. Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was used for selecting 50 homogenized female EFL learners from the lower-intermediate levels. After the pre-test interview, all the participants attended the classes for ten sessions to become familiar with CSs. After the classroom treatment, the participants participated in the post-test interview. The findings revealed that the EFL learners' performance in speaking fluency had been affected by explicit instruction of CSs, and the participants' speaking fluency had enhanced after the classroom treatment. Furthermore, it was found that the participants of this study used an appeal for help more than other strategies. Further findings showed that Iranian female EFL learners will have the chance to reach a productive and fluent level of speaking by developing their language knowledge, lexical competence, and use of functional methods in classroom settings. The findings suggest that EFL students respond to various CSs differently as they learn L2. Therefore, it is essential for EFL teachers to broaden and update their knowledge as well as try to identify and implement the teaching methods that are more effective and efficient in their classrooms. The findings of the study imply that pedagogical approaches to teaching speaking skill in Iran need special attention. The findings of this study reveal that Iranian EFL learners have different reactions to different CSs through learning L2. Thus, it is vital for EFL teachers to improve and update

their knowledge and attempt to distinguish and employ more functional and fruitful strategies in their classrooms.

Keywords:Communication strategies, Speaking fluency, Explicit instruction, EFL learner

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an essential process of conveying ideas and feelings by an individual to the interlocutors within a community and it is an important aspect of success. It seems that speaking problem is number one problem that makes the extensive trouble for most of the language learners in the process of learning a second or foreign language (Al-Murtadha, 2019, Behroozian et al., 2023, & Donker et al., 2014). Individuals with high level of communication skills will have high level of speaking skills, and poor communication skills leads to communication breakdown and low speaking ability (Pratama & Zainil 2019). Due to the importance of communication in academic areas, speaking is regarded as the most significant learning ability (Anwar, 2021), and the students should master this skill if they would like to improve their communication skills. However, as the learning process is vary from a language learner to the subsequent, understanding the students' strategies in learning a second or foreign language is vital.

To do this, a large number of studies have been performed which reveal that those learners who know how to use the language strategies are successful language learners (Anggraeni, 2021, Al-Ahdal & Alqasham, 2020, Al-Ahdal, 2020), and they can overcome their communication problems (Chan, 2021). Therefore, those who utilize various strategies surpass those who fail to take advantage of strategies (Hong et al., 2021), and doubtlessly these language strategies have impacts on their capacity to make them excellent language learners (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). As a result, understanding how the language learners use these strategies is a critical issue that is used by teachers in their teachings to produce the excellent language learners (Putri & Fatimah, 2021, as cited in Alsaraireh, 2022).

Strategies refer to specific methods to approach a task or a problem to achieve a special end. They are contextualized and vary from moment to moment. To Rastegar and Gohari (2016), people use multiple ways for communication with each other. Therefore, there are various strategies available for language learners to communicate in a foreign language. These strategies are communication strategies. Strategies are believed to differ within an individual (Brown, 2007). Strategies are of two types: Learning and communication strategies (CSs). Brown (2007) indicates that learning strategies are related to (a) processing, (b) storage, and (c) retrieval, considering taking messages from others. On the other hand, the term 'communication strategy' was used by Selinker for the first time in 1972. It refers to one of the processes that can be responsible for producing 'inter-language errors' (Brown, 2007). To Castro (2021), CSs will be influential tools to foster the conversation and facilitate the interaction among the

individuals. In addition, they advocate learners to get their meaning across in challenging situations.

Despite the lack of agreement among scholars on the CS definitions, CS can be regarded as apliance that the language learners apply to decline their communication problems (Cao, 2014). CSs can be used as language tactics to take control the linguistic difficulties and solve the students' interaction problems (Behroozian et al., 2023, Daguay-James & Bulusan, 2020; Kaufmann et al., 2021; Soodmand Afshar & Bayat, 2021). According to Cao (2014), "CSs are solutions to difficulties in communicating with a second or foreign language learner" (p. 54). In a definition by Dewaele (2019), CS are considered as the tactics individuals employ to fill the communication gap. In addition, CSs will foster the language learners' assurance and advocate them to overcome their fear of speking a foreign language (Mellati et al., 2022). As CSs influence all communication activities, it has received special attention among EFL instructors and language learners (Lee et al., 2019).

Although the theoretical relevance of the notion of CSs with production skills has been strongly affirmed, there indeed remains the problem of teaching CSs explicitly (Aliakbari & KarimiAlivar, 2009). In the case of lack of linguistic knowledge, it is believed that the Iranian lower intermediate EFL learners stop their communication in class. The significant point is that students cannot speak English fluently at a low intermediate level of language proficiency, particularly when they lack linguistic knowledge (Sadighi & Dehghan, 2012). Therefore, teaching CSs may help empower EFL learners to participate in second language (L2) communication by aiding them in not giving up on the conversation (Teng, 2012). Although empirical evidence supports the use of LLS in EFL learning, there is still a shortage of evidence and research supporting the use of CSs in practicing speaking fluency at the lower intermediate level of language proficiency. The perception of Iranian EFL students concerning using CSs in their English language learning endeavors was examined by Moazen et al. in 2016. Their study also sought to determine whether students' perceptions of using CSs were influenced by their gender. The study found that female students outperformed males in communication methods regardless of treatment received and that it is essential to teach CSs to EFL learners, specifically to men. It can benefit male students by enabling them to learn and communicate with their teachers and peers more effectively.

Based on using CSs in Iranian English classrooms and providing recommendations for English language teachers and language teacher educators, the current study aimed to investigate the effect of explicit instruction of CSs on lower intermediate EFL learners in one

language Institute in the city of Shiraz to help EFL learners to reduce the number of pauses and halts which cause a low level of fluency in their speaking. Accordingly, this study investigated how explicit teaching of CSs in EFL classrooms is useful for increasing language learners' fluency. At the same time, they are engaged in speaking tasks to develop their speaking fluency practice through strategies-based instruction. This study is significant as it illustrates the contribution that communication techniques can make to improving speaking fluency. One aspect of the educational program can be raising students' knowledge of potential communication issues and the advantages of using various CSs to solve them in various circumstances.

The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on the impact of explicit instruction of Communication Strategies (CSs) on the speaking fluency of lower intermediate Iranian female EFL learners. While previous research has explored the role of CSs in language learning, this study is unique in examining this specific learner population and context. Moreover, the study also contributes to the ongoing debate about the effectiveness of explicit vs. implicit instruction of CSs. By providing empirical evidence of the benefits of explicit instruction for this particular group of learners, this study adds a valuable perspective to this discussion. Additionally, the study provides insights into which CSs are most frequently used by these learners, offering useful information for educators and researchers interested in optimizing language instruction for similar learner populations.

This study aimed at addressing the following research questions:

1. How does explicit instruction of communication strategies improve the speaking fluency of lower intermediate Iranian EFL learners?
2. What are the most useful communication strategies for Iranian EFL learners?

LITRATURE REVIEW

Behroozian et al. (2021) concluded that most educators thought it was practical to teach CSs. It was also discovered that these techniques helped English language learners talk more fluently and raised their awareness of CSs. Additionally, Kostantinov (2021) looked into the impact of CSs instruction on Spanish low-intermediate level English language learners. The experimental group in the study utilized a greater number of CSs resources when resolving communicative problems. After the treatment, an impact of the explicit teaching of the CSs was observed. According to the study, the task type impacted the quantity and variety of CSs the students produced. The type of task and the time limitations can also be used to explain this phenomenon.

It is possible to link the differences between the two groups to explicit CSs training, which has pedagogical consequences for language teachers.

Sato et al. (2019) tried to pinpoint the CSs used in talk-in-interaction with English language teachers by 20 Japanese low-proficiency users of English. The CSs examined included pragmatic and collaborative techniques discovered in various EFL studies and those examined from L2 learning perspectives. They concluded that a more precise analysis of how low-proficiency English speakers strive to achieve effective L2 communication with interlocutors could be formed by looking into CSs from the perspective of EFL. Besides, the students, who had not previously received instruction in strategies, were found to have cooperatively used a variety of CSs to deal with a breakdown in communication, advance message delivery, and co-create a meaningful interaction with their interlocutors. These results shed light on how low proficiency users might be able to communicate in different EFL settings successfully. The data analysis assisted teachers in learning which CSs low proficiency pupils could become capable of using more readily and those for which they might need more rigorous practice.

The evaluation results of the learners' level of strategic competency revealed some development in that area. In studying EFL in Norway, Bøhn and Myklevold (2018) investigated the effect of CS teaching on learners' usage of such tactics. According to their findings, learners who had received explicit instruction used CSs more frequently than those who had not. Additionally, they employed a greater variety of effective tactics. They also seemed to be more aware of the tactics they were employing. The usage of strategies was not associated with skill level, although there was a small but significant positive correlation found to be existing between motivation and the use of methods. In another context, Pawar (2018) reported that students do not receive adequate training to use CSs in EFL classrooms, which leads to some students using ineffective CSs. Before having conversations, they typically write everything down in their notes, allowing them to plan the conversations and make them sound more rigid and free of communication issues. Additionally, they are hardly ever encouraged or required by teachers or textbooks to speak normally or use any CSs (Pawar, 2018).

Alahmed (2017) examined how CSs usage by pre-intermediate Arabic English language learners differed depending on whether the instruction was explicit or implicit. According to Alahmed's (2017) findings, the instruction of both explicit and implicit strategies has a beneficial effect on participants' CSs usage and task support. The findings also indicated that whereas implicit instruction was more successful at fostering time-gaining and positive self-solving CSs, explicit instruction was better at fostering "meaning-negotiation, positive self-

solving, non-verbal, and time-gaining” CSs (Alahmed, 2017, p. 188). Additionally, Rabab’ah (2016) reported that according to findings from earlier studies, explicit instruction of CSs is frequently successful in developing learners’ CSs and may help develop stronger oral performance. Furthermore, in 2016, Kongsom looked into how teaching CSs affected Thai engineering undergraduate students' strategic thinking and communication skills. The results demonstrated that the instruction in their use positively impacted the students’ reports of using the ten CSs. In terms of the speaking tasks, the results revealed that after receiving ten weeks of CS teaching, the students successfully applied all ten CSs to their utterances in the four speaking tasks. In addition, the study by Abdi and Varzandeh (2014) found that learners generally welcomed the teaching of CSs and believed that using these strategies would quickly improve their skills.

METHODOLOGY

Quasi-experimental research is similar to experimental research in that an independent variable is manipulated. It differs from experimental research because either there is no control group, no random selection, no random assignment, and/or no active manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In the current study, the authors examined the effect of an intervention but without any control group due to the restriction of participants. Therefore, the study has a quasi-experimental design.

Study Population and Sample

The participants of this study were 50 Iranian female EFL learners selected from 80 students at a language institute in Shiraz. The participants’ ages ranged between 14 to 16 years old. The criterion for participants’ selection was their performance in an Oxford Placement Test (OPT), and 50 EFL learners who were more homogeneous were selected as the final target. The participants who got 30-39 out of 60 in the OPT were pre-intermediate and became the final target of the current study. All participants were EFL learners of the language institute in which the researcher herself teaches. So, the convenience sampling technique was utilized for participant selection. As a non-probability sampling technique, convenience sampling chooses samples depending on how accessible they are for the researcher. Rather than being chosen at random or in a methodical manner, the selection of individuals or things occurs because they are easily accessible. After selecting the appropriate participants, to consider the norm of a standard pedagogical class, they were divided into two equal groups (25 EFL learners in each class) because working with 50 students in one class was practically impossible.

Instruments

The following instruments were used:

1. Language Proficiency Test

To fulfill the homogeneity among the study participants, a sample model of a quick placement test of OPT (2001, version 2) including 60 questions was used. This placement test was divided into five sections where all the questions were designed in multiple-choice form. The first section included five tests (1-5), and the second section (6-20) was in cloze-passage form. The third part included 20 test items (21-40) referring to grammar and vocabulary. The fourth section, with ten questions (41-50), dealt with vocabulary; finally, the last part included ten questions (51-60) related to grammar and vocabulary.

In this regard, if students could answer 0-17 out of 60, they were beginners. Those who scored 18-29 out of 60 were elementary. The students who got 30-39 out of 60 were pre-intermediate. Those who scored 40-47 out of 60 were upper intermediate, and the students who scored more than 47 were considered advanced EFL learners. The (OPT) model used in this study was taken from Kazemi et al. (2014). In order to assess the validity of the tests, the researcher asked three TEFL specialists from Shiraz Islamic Azad University (IAU)'s English department to assess the context and format of the tests. The reliability of the OPT model test was 0.92, measured through SPSS analysis of Cronbach Alpha, similar to Kazemi et al. (2014).

2. Pre-Test interview

The authors used the pre-test as structured interviews based on the frequent topics in the Top Notch series (in this context, Top Notch 1) to catch the initial differences among the study participants on oral production. All participants were interviewed individually for about ten minutes out of class in individual sessions with the researchers. Moreover, the pre-test, which was utilized in this step, was inspired by Tavakoli et al. (2011). It included sixteen items in the open-ended form to measure the participants' fluency in speaking. Thus, the questions were fixed, but the answers depended on the participants' responses. In some cases, they were similar, while different responses were expected, too. It means that some students had the same responses to the question, like *What do you do in summer?* (e.g., I sleep; I study; we travel), but some students explained the answers and used longer sentences.

3. Post-Test Interview

After covering the explicit instruction of CSs as a pedagogical concept through the ten sessions of classroom treatment, all the participants were asked to take part in another oral performance test to measure their oral performance. The post-test was inspired by Tavakoli et al. (2011). It

included sixteen items in an open-ended format. The contents of the pre-test and the post-test interview were similar. The pedagogical treatment of the present study continued for ten sessions (every session continued for 90 minutes), and six explicit CSs were applied through classroom activities. The six strategies utilized through classroom treatment were: Approximation; Use of all-purpose words; Appeal for help; Prefabricated patterns; Circumlocution; and Stalling or time-gaining strategies. In sum, the following steps were applied during ten sessions: In the first session (as a pre-test interview), all the participants in two classes (50 learners) were interviewed orally. Each interview lasted 10 minutes. The classes were interviewed on two different days. Each interview consisted of sixteen questions.

Materials of the study

A hand-out was utilized as classroom material. The researcher prepared the hand-out with the help of two experienced and knowledgeable teachers in the language institute taken from the Top Notch series. The researcher covered them in class, and the participants worked on them inside and outside the classroom to do their homework. The hand-out contained six strategies explained in simplified sentences for students to understand. Some examples accompanied the explanations of hand-outs. The hand-outs were copied and distributed among students. The participants were familiar with the contents of the Top Notch series. After transcribing the data based on an individual interview in the pre-test and the post-test, the number of pauses in the participants' oral production was counted by two raters. The first rater was the researcher of the current study. The second rater was a person who lived and studied English for 12 years in Australia that can be considered a near-native English speaker.

Classroom treatment

After the interview, the participants attended classes comprising two weekly sessions (10 sessions) and followed the designed classroom treatment. Every session continued for 90 minutes, and the classes were held at Rahiyan-Elm language institute (in Shiraz). After permission from the authorities in the institute, the participants took part in classes that were not the usual schedule and were out of the institutes' educational plan (as over-time classes). In the second session, the instructor introduced the *approximation strategy* in the class and practiced this communication strategy. The third session reviewed the previous session, and the teacher introduced the second strategy (*use of all-purpose words*). After introducing the second strategy, the students practiced it in class. In the fourth session, the participants of both classes reviewed and practiced all steps and aspects of the *approximation strategy and use of all-*

purpose words strategy. The third explicit CS, namely *appeals for help*, was introduced and applied in the class during the fifth session. In the sixth session, the study participants got familiar with prefabricated pattern strategy, and the students practiced it in class. The seventh session dealt with introducing and practicing the *circumlocution* strategy. In the eighth session, the instructor introduced *stalling or time-gaining strategy* in the class, and the students practiced this strategy in group work. The ninth session of the study was devoted to a general review of all the strategies. In the last session, the post-test interview, all the participants took an oral test, and the instructor assessed their performance in speaking as a summative evaluation.

In the current study, the participants were made aware of the various solutions for problems and difficulties arising during communication. The CSs were introduced and practiced during the treatment phase and then summarised and reviewed at the end of the classroom treatment. The meaning, form, and application of the approach the students would learn were all explained. The strategy had to be practiced by the students in several tasks, either by themselves or in specific contexts. To check that the pupils were performing the work correctly, the teacher intervened at this point by asking a question or asking someone to raise a question in the class. Only after the students had finished the assignment did the teacher offer feedback. Students were encouraged at this stage to try harder to utilize the language, reach a useful level of speaking fluency, and receive higher grades. The final phase of the lesson was a review session where students were encouraged to apply all of the skills they had learned to complete a task. Students were allowed to convey their ideas using any language, sentence patterns, or topic they wanted (Tavakoli et al., 2011).

This study did not include other types of CSs such as Word coinage, Code-switching, Foreignizing, and Translation. Many relevant activities suggested by various researchers for teaching CSs were used through classroom treatment, e.g., role play, pair work, and group work (Storch, 2002; Nadeem, 2013). Therefore, as a researcher, the teacher provided all the participants with the explicit teaching of CSs. In every ninety-minute session, the students practiced all the six above-mentioned CSs in role-play, pairwork, and group work speaking tasks defined and classified in the distributed hand-outs.

RESULTS

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics, including N, minimum, maximum, mean, std. deviation, and variance of both pre-test and post-test.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
					Std. Error	
Pre-test	50	2.50	8.00	5.2800	.17212	1.21706
Post-test	50	3.00	10.00	6.4700	.22012	1.55645
Valid N (listwise)	50					

The data in Table 1 shows that the minimum score in the pre-test was 2.50, and the post-test was 3.00. The maximum scores were 8 and 10 on the pre-test and post-test, respectively. The mean score was 5.28 on the pre-test and 6.47 on the post-test. To survey whether this mean difference between these two groups was statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was run. The data can be observed in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Paired Samples t-test

		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre-test post-test	-1.19	.86	.12	-1.43510	-.94490	-9.75	49	.000

The data in Table 2 shows that the mean difference was -1.19, the SD equals .86, df was 49, and sig (2-tailed) is .000 indicating a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. Frequencies were calculated for assessing the selection and the distribution of the six CSs taught to the study participants. The obtained data in this regard is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of Strategy Use

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Approximation	50	4.10	1.61	2.62
use of all-purpose words	50	2.02	1.49	2.22
appeal for help	50	5.64	1.66	2.76
prefabricated pattern	50	2.22	1.581	2.50
Circumlocution	50	3.10	1.55	2.30
Stalling or time-gaining strategy	50	2.02	1.49	2.22

The frequencies of strategy use indicated that in comparison to other strategies, “appeal for help” was used more by the participants (mean = 2.76). The least frequent strategies were “use of all-purpose words” and “Stalling or time-gaining strategy” (mean = 2.22 each).

In the post-test interviews, many participants demonstrated improved speaking fluency and effective use of the communication strategies (CSs) that were taught. For instance, one participant who initially struggled with maintaining conversation flow showed significant improvement in her post-test interview. She effectively used the “Appeal for help” strategy by asking questions like “How do you say...?” when she couldn’t remember a specific word. This allowed her to maintain the conversation flow without significant pauses.

Another participant demonstrated effective use of the “Approximation” strategy. In the pre-test interview, she often paused or stopped speaking when she couldn’t remember a specific word. However, in the post-test interview, she could describe the word or concept she was trying to convey, significantly improving her speaking fluency.

The “stalling or time-gaining” strategy and “Use of all-purpose words” were less frequently used. However, some participants did incorporate these strategies into their speaking. For example, one participant used phrases like “Let me think...” to gain time when formulating her responses.

DISCUSSION

The first research question addresses the Impact of Explicit Instruction of CSs on Speaking Fluency. The results of this study show a significant effect of explicit instruction of Communication Strategies (CSs) on improving the speaking fluency of Iranian lower intermediate female EFL learners. This finding aligns with Teng’s (2012) study, which found that systematic strategy instruction improved CSs use by EFL learners. Furthermore, the findings resonate with Li and Liu’s (2008) study, which found that strategy-based instruction positively determines students’ improvement in foreign language comprehension.

The second research question explored the most useful communication strategies. The study reveals that learners used the “Appeal for help” and “Approximation” strategies more frequently, while the “Stalling or time-gaining” strategy and “Use of all-purpose words” were used less often. This suggests that different CSs may be more or less effective depending on the specific context and learner.

When compared to other studies, the current research provides unique insights into the specific context of Iranian female EFL learners. For instance, the study’s findings are consistent

with Bøhn and Myklevold's (2018) findings, who found that students who had received explicit instruction used CSs more frequently than those who did not. Additionally, the current study results resonate with the findings of Kosar and Bedir (2014), who conducted research on strategies-based instruction to improve EFL learners' speaking skills. Furthermore, the findings of the current study corroborate the findings of Maleki's (2007), and Pishghadam and MoradyMoghaddam's (2011) studies who accepted that strategy teaching gives EFL learners chance and time to use language in the right manner and to develop fluency and speaking as a productive skill. Additionally, the present study results are supported by other studies conducted by Behroozian et al. (2021); Lewis (2011); Lindblad (2011); Littlemore (2003); Noviyenty et al. (2022); and Rodríguez and Rodríguez (2012) who worked on the same issue and found the same results.

The current findings also revealed that the EFL learners' performance in speaking fluency was affected by the explicit instruction of CSs. In other words, the participants' speaking fluency enhanced after the classroom treatment. In their study on Iranian higher education teachers, Behroozian et al. (2021) concluded that most teachers thought it was practical to teach CSs. Additionally, it was discovered that these techniques helped English language learners talk more fluently and raised their awareness of CSs. Kostantinov (2021) found that the treatment of CSs demonstrated an effect of the explicit teaching of the CSs. Similar findings have been evidenced in the current study.

In conclusion, the current study contributes to the ongoing debate about the effectiveness of explicit vs. implicit instruction of CSs, providing empirical evidence of the benefits of explicit instruction for this particular group of learners. It also offers insights into which CSs are most frequently used by these learners, offering useful information for educators and researchers interested in optimizing language instruction for similar learner populations.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings, CSs have a lot of benefits for enhancing Iranian female students' English speaking skill which is influenced by the communication activities they are exposed to. CSs allow the students to practice speaking the English language spontaneously and fluently under the effect of some CSs. Thus, it is concluded that teaching CSs is useful and feasible. Additionally, it can be conjectured from the current findings that EFL learners should receive adequate information and CSs assistance before speaking to decrease their speaking pauses. When speaking, students need to be given the time and space to focus entirely on expressing

their meanings while developing fluency. To increase their speaking fluency and eliminate hesitation or pauses, EFL students should be given opportunities to see the proper use of CSs after speaking. Finally, extension practice is significant in reinforcing EFL learners' communicative language use and helping learners develop fluent spoken English.

The study's findings indicate that special attention need to be given to pedagogical approaches to teaching speaking skills in Iran. It can be asserted that this area of teaching English holds great importance in the EFL learning process, so it seems that any activity in teaching/learning speaking in L2 classrooms requires an integrated method considering EFL learners' interests and background knowledge. In other words, instead of teaching speaking skills through just one fixed strategy, employing and following the appropriate strategies to their proficiency level is better.

It is crystal clear that EFL teachers can promote EFL learners' speaking fluency through defined CSs, but it must be kept in mind that speaking is a productive skill and requires a great level of language competence. By improving EFL learners' linguistic knowledge and lexical competence and employing functional strategies in the classroom sets, EFL learners will have a chance to reach a productive and fluent speaking level. Considering the findings of this study, it seems that Iranian EFL learners have different reactions to different CSs through learning L2. Thus, it seems vital for EFL teachers to improve and update their knowledge and attempt to distinguish and employ more functional and fruitful strategies in their classrooms. To sum up, CSs are crucial to EFL teaching and learning. Particularly compensatory tactics will unquestionably advance learners' expressive proficiency. Teachers can help students learn CSs and practice the target language by communicating these concepts.

The study has some limitations. First of all, the research was carried out in one lower intermediate class which lasted for five weeks. Second, the population of the experimental group was small. The population of the study that was limited to 50 lower intermediate students at an English language institute in Iran whose sages ranged between 14 to 16 years. Third, only female students comprised the study sample. Fourth, there does not appear to be enough evidence of students' real behavior to improve speaking fluency, despite the fact that the questionnaire intended to gauge the students' attitudes toward the use of CSs may provide insightful data about the effects of such strategies.

Identifying research gaps is crucial as it highlights the areas that need further exploration and understanding. In the context of the current study, some potential gaps can be elaborated as: (a) Specific Focus on Female Learners: This study focuses on Iranian female EFL learners.

While this provides valuable insights into this particular group, it leaves a gap in understanding how explicit instruction of Communication Strategies (CSs) impacts other demographic groups, such as male learners or learners from different age groups or cultural backgrounds. (b) Limited Range of Communication Strategies (CSs): The study investigates six specific CSs. However, learners might use many other CSs. Future research could explore the impact of these other strategies on speaking fluency. (c) Focus on Lower Intermediate Learners: The study concentrates on lower intermediate learners. This leaves a gap in our understanding of how explicit instruction of CSs impacts learners at different proficiency levels, such as beginners or advanced learners. (d) Lack of a Control Group: The study uses a quasi-experimental design without a control group. This makes it difficult to compare the impact of explicit instruction of CSs with other teaching methods or with no specific strategy instruction. (e) Single Geographic Location: The study is conducted in one language institute in Shiraz. This might limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or regions. (f) Focus on Speaking Fluency: While speaking fluency is a critical aspect of language proficiency, the study does not address other important skills such as reading comprehension, writing, and listening. Addressing these gaps in future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role and impact of CSs in EFL learning and teaching. Future research can study the effects of teamwork strategies on EFL learners' speaking skills, focusing on both genders (male and female) through a comparative study and look into the effects of these strategies on advanced EFL learners' speaking fluency.

REFERENCES

- Abdi, G., & Varzandeh, O. (2014). EFL learners' attitudes toward communication strategies: a qualitative investigation. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World (IJLLALW)*, 5(3), 167-175.
- Aguilera-Hermida, A. P. (2020). College students' use and acceptance of emergency online learning due to COVID-19. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 1, 100011. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2020.100011>
- Pawar, S.V. (2018). A study of communication strategies employed by Radfan College EFL students in their classroom interactions. *New Academia: An International Journal of English Language, Literature and Literary Theory*, 8 (3), 163-176.
- Al-Ahdal, A. A. M. H. & Alqasham, F. H. (2020). Saudi EFL Learning and Assessment in Times of Covid-19: Crisis and beyond. *Asian EFL Journal*, 28(1.1), 356-383.
- Al-Ahdal, A. A. M. H. (2020). Overcoming Pronunciation Hurdles in EFL Settings: An Evaluation of Podcasts as a Learning Tool at Qassim University Saudi Arabia. *Asian EFL Journal Research Articles*, 27-35.

- Alahmed, K.I.M. (2017). Developing Strategic Competence through Task-Based Language Teaching: A Comparison of Implicit and Explicit Instruction (Doctoral Dissertation). University of York. Retrieved from <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/20205/1/Khalid%20Alahmed%20Final%20Thesis.pdf>
- Aliakbari, M., & Karimi, A. (2009). *Communication strategies in the written medium: The effect of Language proficiency*, Linguistik online, Retrieved from https://www.linguistik-online.de/40_09/aliakbariAllar.html
- Al-Murtadha, M. (2019). Enhancing EFL learners' willingness to communicate with visualization and goal-setting activities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 53, 133–157. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.474>
- Alsaraireh, M., Y. (2022). Strategies in Enhancing Speaking Skills of EFL Students, *World Journal of English Language*, 12 (2), URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n2p371>
- Amin, M. Y. M. (2017). Communication Strategies and Gender Differences: A Case Study. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 4 (3).
- Anggraeni, S. (2021). Politeness Principles In “Persuasion” Movie. *International Journal of English Linguistics, Literature, and Education (IJELLE)*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.32585/ijelle.v3i1.1502>
- Anwar, M. (2021). Prediction of the graduation rate of engineering education students using Artificial Neural Network Algorithms. *International Journal of Research in Counseling and Education*, 5(1), 23-31. <https://doi.org/10.24036/00411za0002>
- Behroozian, R., Ghafoori, N., & Ahangari, S. (2021). EFL Teachers' and Students' Perceptions about Communication Strategies Teachability. *The Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice*, 14(28), 135-156.
- Behroozian, R., Ghafoori, N., & Ahangari, S. (2023). An Explicit Communication Strategies Instruction: Iranian EFL Learners' Self-Reported Use of Communication Strategies. *Language Related Research*, 14(1), 219-250.
- Bøhn, H., & Myklevold, G-A. (2018). *Exploring Communication Strategy Use and Metacognitive Awareness in the EFL Classroom*. Retrieved from <https://hiof.brage.unit.no/hiof-xmlui/handle/11250/2600205>
- Brown, H.D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- Cao, Y. (2014). A sociocognitive perspective on second language classroom willingness to communicate. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48, 789–814. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.155>
- Castro, C. G., (2021). The Impact of Communication of Strategies on Learners' Accuracy, Fluency and Vocabulary, Research project to obtain the degree of Master in English Didactics, Universidad de Caldas.
- Chan, J. Y. H. (2021). Bridging the gap between ELF and L2 learners' use of communication strategies: Rethinking current L2 assessment and teaching practices. *System*, 101, 102609. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102609>
- Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

- Daguay-James, H., & Bulusan, F. (2020). Metacognitive strategies on reading English texts of ESL freshmen: a sequential explanatory mixed design. *TESOL International Journal*, 15(1), 20–30.
- Dewaele, J. M. (2019). The effect of classroom emotions, attitudes toward English, and teacher behavior on willingness to communicate among English foreign language learners. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 38(4), 523–535. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X19864996>
- Donker, A.S., Boer, H., Kostons, D., Dignath van Ewijk, C., & Van der Werf, M.P. (2014). Effectiveness of learning strategy instruction on academic performance: a Meta-Analysis. *Educational Research Review* 11(9). DOI:10.1016/j.edurev.2013.11.002
- Hong, J. C., Lee, Y. F., & Ye, J. H. (2021). Procrastination predicts online self-regulated learning and online learning ineffectiveness during the coronavirus lockdown. *Personality and individual differences*, 174, 110673. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.110673>
- Kaufmann, R., Vallade, J. I., & Frisby, B. N. (2021). Memorable messages in times of uncertainty: Communicative strategies to encourage motivation and connection. *Communication Education*, 70(3), 288–306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2021.1904144>
- Kazemi, S.A., Zarei, L., & Bagheri, M.S. (2014). *The ABCs of Proposal Writing & Conducting Academic Studies*. Yasooj: Azad University.
- Kongsom, T. (2016). The impact of teaching communication strategies on English speaking of engineering undergraduates. *PASAA*, 51, 39-69.
- Kosar, G., & Bedir, H. (2014). Strategies-based instructions: A means of improving adult EFL learners' speaking skills. *International Journal of Language Academy*, 2(3), 12-26.
- Kostantinov, A. (2021). The impact of Spanish instruction on English learners' ability to comprehend text. *Journal of English Studies*, 2(4), 77–92.
- Lee, J. S., Lee, K., & Hsieh, J. C. (2019). Understanding willingness to communicate in L2 between Korean and Taiwanese students. *Language Teaching Research*, (2)4, 56-68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168819890825>
- Lewis, S. (2011). Are Communication Strategies Teachable?. *Online Submission*, 20, 46-54.
- Li, Y., & Liu, Y. (2008). The impact of strategies-based instruction on listening comprehension. *English Language Teaching*, 1(2), 128-134.
- Lindblad, M. (2011). Communication strategies in speaking English as a foreign language. *Modern Language Journal*, 90, 1-30.
- Littlemore, J. (2003). The communicative effectiveness of different types of communication strategy. *System*, 31(3), 331-347.
- Maleki, A. (2007). Teachability of communication strategies: An Iranian experience. *System* 35(4), 583-594.
- Mellati, M., Alavi, S., & Dashtestani, R. (2022). Reduction of errors in writing assignments: A comparison of the impact of peer, teacher, and mixed feedback. *Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 10(4), 152–166. Doi: 20.1001.1.24763187.2021.10.4.10.0
- Moazen, M., Kafipour, R., & Soori, A. (2016). Iranian EFL learners' perception of the use of communication strategies and gender effect. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 24(3), 1193-1204.

- Nadeem, M. (2013). Enhancing communication skills through theatrical techniques. *Canadian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 9-17.
- Noviyenty, L., Morganna, R., & Fakhruddin. (2022). English speaking lecturers' performances of communication strategies and their efforts to improve students' communicative competence. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 11(2), 1047-1062.
- Pishghadam, R., & MoradyMoghaddam, M. (2011). Group work in EFL children's classes: A qualitative study. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(6), 622-629.
- Pratama, V., & Zainil, Y. (2019). EFL Learners' communication strategy on speaking Performance of interpersonal conversation in classroom discussion presentation. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, volume 411 7th International Conference on English Language and Teaching (ICOELT 2019).
- Putri, Y., & Fatimah, S. (2021, September). An Analysis of Students' Language Learning Strategy and Lecturers' Language Teaching Strategy in Writing for Media Communication Class. In Eighth International Conference on English Language and Teaching (ICOELT-8 2020) (pp. 192-196). Atlantis Press. Retrieved from [file:///C:/Users/KTM/Downloads/125960900%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/KTM/Downloads/125960900%20(1).pdf)
- Rabab'ah, G. (2016). The effect of communication strategy training on the development of EFL learners' strategic competence and oral communicative ability. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 45(3), 625-651.
- Rastegar, M., & Gohari, M. (2016), Communication strategies, attitude, and oral output of EFL learners: A study of relations. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics* 06(05):401-419. DOI:10.4236/ojml.2016.65036
- Rodríguez Cervantes, C. A., & Roux Rodriguez, R. (2012). The use of communication strategies in the beginner EFL classroom. *Gist Education and Learning Research Journal*, 6, 111-128.
- Sadighi, F. & Dehghan, F. (2012). *A manual of language acquisition approaches and theories*, Navid Shiraz Publications.
- Sato, T., Yujobo, Y.J., Okada, T., & Ogane, E. (2019). Communication strategies employed by low-proficiency users: Possibilities for ELF-informed pedagogy. *JELF*, 8(1), 9-35.
- Soodmand Afshar, H., & Bayat, M. (2021). An investigation into the impact of language learning strategy instruction on the less successful Iranian EFL learners' L2 achievement. *Language Related Research*, 12(3), 1-24. <http://lrr.modares.ac.ir/article-14-47344-en.html>.
- Storch, N. (2002). Pattern of interaction in ESL pair work. *Language Learning*, 52(1), 119-158.
- Talley, P.C., & Hui-ling, T. (2014). Implicit and explicit teaching of English speaking in the EFL classroom. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(6) 38-46.
- Tavakoli, M., Dastjerdi, H. V., & Esteki, M. (2011). The effect of explicit strategy instruction on L2 oral production of Iranian Intermediate EFL learners: Focusing on accuracy, fluency and complexity. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2 (5), 989-997.
- Teng, H. (2012). A study on the teach ability of EFL communication strategies. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 3566 - 3570.