

Teachers' vs. Learners' Communicative Strategies in EFL Classes

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ABSTRACT

Communicative competence and awareness of communicative strategies are vital factors in EFL learning. Due to their importance, this study aimed to investigate the strategies used by EFL teachers and learners. To this end, 10 teachers were randomly selected. One hundred fifty EFL learners attending these classes were also subjected to the study. The utterances produced by participants were recorded, transcribed, and coded based on Dornyei's taxonomy (1995). A mixed-method approach entailing both qualitative and quantitative analysis was taken. The findings indicated that while compensatory strategy was the most frequently used strategy (54%) by EFL learners, stalling or time gaining strategy was the least frequently used one (19%) with the avoidance communicative strategy (27%) placed between them., EFL teachers, however, employed the strategy of stalling or time gaining most frequently (63%), while the strategy of avoidance was the least frequently used strategy (11%) by the EFL teachers after the compensatory communicative strategy (26%). Finally, in further analysis, the results of the chi-square test demonstrated a significant difference between teachers' and learners' strategy use frequency. Language teachers need to be aware of the type and frequency of effective communicative strategies used by their learners to raise their consciousness about the appropriate use of efficient strategies. Teacher trainers can help these teachers with the proper means of initiating and maintaining classroom interactions to foster the communicative and strategic competencies of their learners. Material developers need to take these findings into account in course content preparation to improve strategy use among language learners.

Keywords: Achievement Strategy; Avoidance strategy; Communicative Strategy; Dornyei's taxonomy; Stalling Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the crucial skills that challenge learners to different degrees and has attracted more attention across language learning because it permeates almost all human interaction activities. In fact, what makes human beings unique is that verbal communication is complex in all aspects. However, EFL learners face serious problems while communicating in a new language. EFL learners need to find out effective ways to communicate their ideas effectively. Being able to “interact with other speakers, to make meaning” (Savignon, 2005, p. 636) is directly related to their communicative competence which has long been the main purpose of learning a new language (Ellis, 2012). The ultimate goal of communicative approaches to language teaching is to develop the communicative competence of foreign language learners (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Attempts to close the communication gaps are called communicative strategies (CSs). The type of deployed communicative strategies and the frequency of their use are highly determined by the specific classroom contexts and the learners' language proficiency levels. Therefore, teachers are recommended to assess the strategy use by their learners in the learning context and

accordingly select the appropriate one for further instruction. (Nakatani, 2006, p. 161). The significant point to be considered here is that sometimes learners manage to use the communicative strategies to overcome communication problems, but most learners and in cases even the teachers are not aware of these strategies. Being familiar with communicative strategies can help learners and even teachers to maintain communication because these strategies expand the students' communicative tools beyond their linguistic competence (Schmitt, 2013).

The fluency and ease with which we flow from one thought to the next in our native language, as Bialystok (1990) puts it, is continually disrupted by some gaps in our second language knowledge. Both native and non-native speakers can make themselves understood by using certain grammatical structures or expressions in the target language. Richards, Platt, and Weber (1986, p. 49) observed communicative competence as a multi-dimensional concept entailing (a) knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary, (b) knowledge of the speaking rules, (c) knowledge of how to use and respond to various kinds of speech, and (d) knowledge on the appropriate use of the language.

Interlanguage research and learner errors were the theoretical predecessors of communication strategies in the early 1970s when Selinker (1972) developed the concept of second language communication strategies in his seminar article "Interlanguage". He claimed that learners' lack of language understanding combined with their desire to communicate leads to the development of communication strategies. Selinker's study (1972) turned out to be the key point in communication strategy studies. Communication strategy research appeared as an attention-grabbing ground for researchers. Canale and Swain (1980) also considered communication strategy as the sub-competencies of strategic competence in communicative competence. Later Corder (1981, p.103) proposed a working definition for communication strategies as "systematic techniques employed by the speaker to express his meaning when faced with some difficulty".

According to Dornyei (1995), L2 users face plenty of problems in communication, the best solution for which can be verbal and nonverbal strategies to enhance their communication. Non-native and native speakers of any language will sometimes strive to discover an appropriate structure or phrase that cannot be cognitively accessible and verbalised when trying to communicate the meaning. Individual language repertoire is not a flawless system, resulting in such a failure or mental lapse. There is a disconnect between an individual's desire to communicate and his or her immediate linguistic range.

Thomas (1984) believes that EFL learners' lack of communicative competence and communicative awareness is most obvious while communicating across cultures. The absence of pragmatic knowledge among EFL learners is partly their teachers' fault because most EFL teachers focus exclusively on grammar and vocabulary (linguistic competence) ignoring the pragmatic or sociolinguistic aspects of language. During communication, speakers try to fetch a suitable linguistic construct, which in some cases fails to be accessed and uttered. Such a failure is resulted due to the imperfect linguistic system of the speaker. Therefore, a gap appears between the speaker's intended meaning and the available linguistic repertoire related to it. Communication strategies as goal-oriented actions are the best fillers for such a gap. Being aware of the strategies will help learners and even teachers to stay active in their communication. Thus, these strategies extend the learners' communicative means beyond their linguistic confidence as well (Schmitt, 2008).

A bulk of research has been done on communication strategies in both EFL and ESL contexts. Despite a large number of studies about interaction research, the research findings regarding the types and frequencies of communicative strategies that EFL learners and teachers use in English classrooms, especially in an EFL context like Iran are under-researched. The present

study discussed the communication strategies used in the EFL context and aimed to find out the strategies used by EFL teachers and learners according to Dornyei's taxonomy. In this regard the following research questions were formulated:

Q1: What are the communicative strategies frequently used by Iranian EFL learners?

Q2: What are the communicative strategies frequently used by Iranian teachers?

Q3: Is there any significant difference between teachers' and learners' use of communicative strategies?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The emergence of communicative competence which enables learners to produce and comprehend a second language over the past few decades by Hymes (1972) resulted in the development of competent users of the new language. The underlying outlook is that language is a formal as well as a social system. Therefore, learning grammatical structures and rules is not enough to be fluent. Focusing on language use as a crucial element of language learning and in a reaction to Chomsky's competence and performance, Bachman (1990) introduced the main component of communicative competence as pragmatic competence. Communication is not just language usage but also language use in a real context where language users experience communication limitations if they are not equipped with the necessary resources. The best way to cope with these problems is to use communicative strategies which help the speakers to continue the conversation and convey their messages (Bialystok, 1990). When the two interlocutors do not share the same meaning structures, communication strategies are their mutual attempt to agree on the intended meaning. When experiencing a tough communication situation, the speakers seize to CSs as a systematic technique to convey the message (Corder, 1981). CSs are the language learners' attempts to close the gap between their linguistic competence in that language and the linguistic competence of the native speakers (Tarone, 1977). Analyzing these strategies can shed some light on the language acquisition process as well as the process of developing competence in a new language. Developing ability in CSs use compensates for learners' target language deficiencies and expands their competence (Dornyei, 1995). Therefore, CSs play a pivotal role in language learning, and studying CSs is pretty significant to facilitate the process of language learning.

Since then, many different studies have been done in this area through which different taxonomies have emerged and been proposed by different researchers for analyzing communicative strategies. Tarone's taxonomy (1977) includes three main categories of Paraphrase, transfer, and avoidance, each with its subdivisions. Transfer consists of literal translation, appeal for assistance, language switch, and mime. Paraphrasing includes word coinage, approximation, and circumlocution. And finally, Avoidance comprises topic avoidance and message abandonment.

Faerch and Kasper (1983) have proposed another main classification for communication strategies. This taxonomy consists of two main strategies: Achievement strategies in which an alternative solution is developed to tackle the problem, and Avoidance strategies through which the problem is avoided. Achievement strategies include cooperative strategies and non-cooperative strategies. In non-cooperative strategies, the problem is solved with no target language use. Avoidance strategies are employed to avoid either a linguistic form or a language function at different levels. This taxonomy seems to be more complicated than Tarone's (1977) taxonomy.

These two product-oriented taxonomies have been criticised by some researchers because they failed to generalise the taxonomies of communication strategies, that is, these taxonomies have ignored the cognitive process underlying the strategy use of the learner. Therefore, in the second half of the 1980s, the Nijmegen group presented a process-oriented taxonomy to fill this gap. This taxonomy was presented to include communication strategies in a cognitive framework. In Nijmegen’s taxonomy compensatory strategies are divided into two main groups Conceptual strategies and Linguistic strategies. Conceptual strategies include Analytic and Holistic strategies. By Analytic strategies, the learner tries to spell out characteristic features of the concept and by holistic strategies, the learner uses a substitute referent sharing the target item characteristics. Besides, Linguistic strategies involve morphological creativity and transfer. The learner uses Linguistic strategies to create comprehensible target language lexis applying the target language morphological derivation rule. Transfer happens when the learners exploit the similarities between languages. This taxonomy was criticised as well for including limited strategy types.

Bialystok (1990) suggested a new approach which was formed on the process of language use in communication. According to Bialystok, communication strategies are divided into two main cognitive skills: Analysis-based and Control-based strategies. Analysis-based strategies entail the ability to make changes to the content of the message by exploiting the concept knowledge. These strategies include some subdivisions as follows: Circumlocution, Word coinage, Paraphrase, Mime, and Transliteration. Control-based strategies are preserving the intended meaning while applying a different means of reference outside the target language. This taxonomy is based on a framework of language processing. Bialystok’s taxonomy is similar to the Nijmegen group in some cases but it is clearer and more complete than that.

Dornyei (1995) collected a list of the most frequent and important communication strategies and put them in one table (Table 1). According to Dornyei, communication strategies are divided into three main groups of Avoidance strategies, Compensatory strategies, as well as Stalling strategies. Avoidance refers to the strategies by which the learner avoids using the language because of the lack of language knowledge or even lack of information about the topic that is called topic avoidance. Compensatory strategies refer to the strategies by which the learner tries to compensate for his/her lack of information in different ways to carry out the communicative goal. The taxonomy also includes Stalling and Time gaining strategies which refer to the use of fillers or hesitation devices to carry on the communication.

TABLE 1. Dornyei’s taxonomy of CSs (1995)

Avoidance or Reduction Strategies
1. Message abandonment
2. Topic avoidance
Achievement or Compensatory Strategies
3. Circumlocution
4. Approximation
5. Use of all-purpose words
6. Word coinage
7. Use of non-linguistic means
8. Literal translation
9. Foreignising
10. Code-switching
11. Appeal for help
Stalling or Time gaining Strategies
12. Use of fillers/ hesitation devices

Cervantes and Rodríguez's (2012) study on EFL teachers' and their beginner-level students' communication strategies revealed language switch as the most frequently used strategy in both groups. However, there was a difference in strategy use of the beginner-level teachers as well. According to the findings, the teacher with high involvement mainly used comprehension checks, clarification requests, and confirmation request strategies, while the distant teacher used repetition and comprehension checks more. There were, however, some other intervening factors such as learning activity types, class size, and seating arrangements.

In another study, Houghton and Al-Asswad (2014) investigated the communication strategies used during the translation of culture-laden Japanese words into Arabic in real-time interaction using English. The findings revealed information provision, paraphrasing, requesting clarification, confirming understanding, and verbalising communicative intent as highly used strategies and signaling uncertainty, repeating the phrase, being explicit and letting it pass, participant lexical anticipation, and participant lexical correction as the least used strategies.

To analyze the types and functions of communication strategies, Rofiatun (2018) observed a senior high school EFL class and interviewed the teacher after the class. Six types of communication strategies namely code-switching, self-rephrasing, use of fillers, asking for confirmation, asking for clarification, and asking for repetition were used by the teacher during the teaching to improve students' communication ability as well as encourage them to speak in English. The teacher believed that these strategies could expand the speaking ability of the learners which fosters their self-confidence in communicative involvement.

In the EFL context of Iran, Nakatani et al. (2012) investigated communication strategy use in open-ended conversation tasks and came up with a relatively low frequency of CSs compared to other EFL contexts, which implies the importance of explicit strategy training to raise the Iranian learners' awareness of them. Their findings revealed that while the proficiency level of the learners did not influence the amount of strategy application, it made a significant difference in the applied strategy type. Low-proficiency learners use strategies mainly to impede the interaction flow, whereas high-proficiency learners aimed at maintaining communication.

Moattarian and Tahririan's (2013) study was also on Iranian EFL learners' communicative strategy use. They found the learners' proficiency level and the context of communication as two highly influencing factors. They identified lexical gaps, problems in discourse management, and uncertainty in conveying the message as the most frequent communication problems of their participants.

A bulk of research has been done on communication strategies in both ESL and EFL contexts. Despite a large number of studies about interaction research, the research findings regarding the types and frequencies of communicative strategies that EFL learners and teachers use in English classrooms, especially in an EFL context like Iran are under-researched. The present study was, therefore, undertaken to explore the communicative strategies used by Iranian EFL teachers and learners.

METHODOLOGY

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

To fulfill the research objectives, a descriptive mixed-method design including both quantitative and qualitative data was employed. This study was exploratory-qualitative-statistical research reporting the statistics in the form of scores. The first two questions employed a qualitative descriptive design and the third question needed a quantitative design for statistical analysis of teacher-learner interaction samples. The results gained in the first two questions helped in discussing the findings of the third question.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study entailed EFL teachers and learners of a reputed language centre in Iran. Ten teachers were randomly selected to be observed and recorded while teaching. They were young to middle-aged highly qualified teachers as approved by the supervisors in their teaching portfolios. They had all experienced teaching upper-intermediate levels.

Each class of the institute included 15 language learners. Therefore, 150 female and male learners attending these teachers' classes were also subjected to this study. All the learners were teenagers in the age range of 15-19. The learner participants within this study were sampled by an intact-group design from the general population of EFL learners of the institute.

The main reason for gathering the data in that institute was the communicative, meaning-based teaching method applied in the classes. The researchers needed to collect instances of communicative strategies occurring incidentally within meaning-focused activities in communicative-oriented EFL classrooms. The powerful supervision policy, taken up by the authority and regular classroom observation, made the instructors adhere strongly to the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) at all times.

MATERIALS AND INSTRUMENTS

The utterances produced in-class interactions were recorded, transcribed, and codified by the researchers based on Dornyei's taxonomy (1995). All the syllabus materials and tasks used by the instructors in the classes were communicatively oriented. The textbooks were the *Interchange* series written by Richards, Hull, and Proctor which are developed based on communicative language teaching principles. The books include all four skills of listening, speaking, writing, and reading to improve second language learners' communicative language ability through different tasks and activities like role-playing, group works, free discussion, reading comprehension, freewriting, and a variety of listening activities like listening to music, film shows, and listening to CDs prepared for the non-native students.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The primary aim of the present project was to examine Iranian EFL teachers' and learners' use of communicative strategies and then to find out any probable differences between the two groups. To serve this purpose, ten teachers were randomly selected to be observed and recorded while teaching. All the students attending those teachers' classes were also sampled for participation in

EFL class interactions. One of the researchers attended each class as a non-participant observer during the sessions to take the required field notes and to increase the validity of the gathered data. The data contained learner-teacher and learner-learner interactional episodes. The data consisted of thirty 90-minute recorded files made up of three class sessions for each teacher. The recorded data was first transcribed and then the teachers' and learners' use of communicative strategies were tabulated in frequencies based on Dornyei's taxonomy (1995).

Dornyei's taxonomy (1995) includes three main strategy categories: 1. Avoidance or Reduction Strategies; 2. Achievement or Compensatory Strategies; and 3. Stalling or Time-gaining Strategies. Avoidance (reduction) strategies are used for alteration, reduction, or complete abandonment of the intended message. Achievement (compensatory) strategies include manipulating available language and compensating for their linguistic deficiencies. And finally, Stalling (time-gaining) strategies involve gaining some extra time and keeping the channel of communication open.

To have reliable results, the data were coded by two of the researchers. Moreover, inter-coder reliability and also intra-coder reliability indexes were calculated. Intra-coder reliability reflects the consistency of an individual's measuring of a constant coding phenomenon, while inter-coder reliability refers to the consistency of different individuals' measuring and coding of the same phenomenon. In statistics, inter-coder reliability is the degree of agreement among coders. It is a score of how much homogeneity or consensus exists in the rating given by various judges. In contrast, intra-rater liability is a score of the consistency in rating given by the same person across multiple instances. One of the researchers coded the data and the other one recoded a portion of them randomly sampled. The inter-rater agreement, measured using Cohen's Kappa formula, was found to be $Kappa = 0.867, p = 0.000$ (As shown in Table 2 below).

TABLE 2. Inter-rater reliability analysis

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.867	.015	33.379	.000
N of Valid Cases		397			

Also, to calculate intra-rater reliability the second researcher coded 30% of the data once more with a time interval of two weeks. The high intra-rater reliability of 91% agreement rate in the identification of communicative strategy types and categorisation was found by Cohen's Kappa formula: $Kappa = 0.912, p = 0.000$ (Table 3).

TABLE 3. Intra-rater reliability analysis

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.912	.015	44.225	.000
N of Valid Cases		432			

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the first research question, the frequencies of all the communicative strategies used by learners are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Communicative strategies used by EFL learners

Communicative strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Avoidance Strategy	236	27%
Compensatory Strategy	473	54%
Stalling Strategy	166	19%

As shown in the table, from among a total of 875 CSs used by Iranian EFL learners, 27% (n=236) related to the avoidance or reduction strategy, 54% (n=473) related to the compensatory or achievement strategies, and 19% (n=166) fell in the category of stalling or time-gaining strategies. The relative standing of each communicative strategy is visualised in Figure 1.

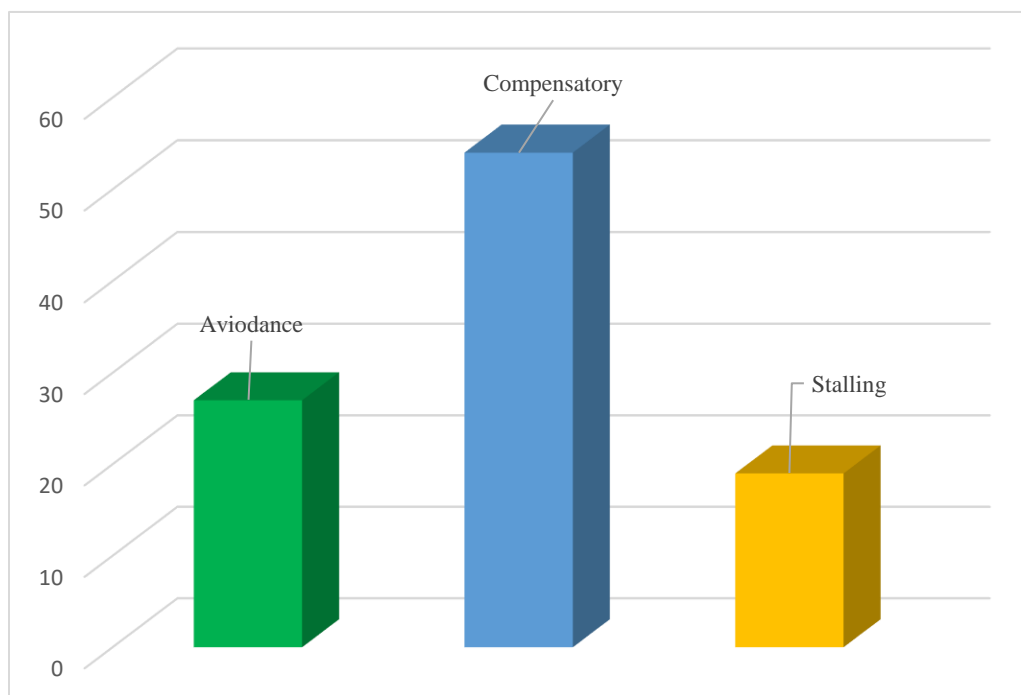


FIGURE 1. The rate of CSs use by EFL learners

Based on the results, it is clear that the strategy of compensatory was the most highly used strategy among the strategies. Moreover, the strategy of stalling or time gaining strategy was the least-frequently used strategy by the EFL students with the avoidance communicative strategy placed between stalling and compensatory strategies. As stated, Dornyei's taxonomy subcategorised each strategy into various sub-types. Table 5 indicates the frequency of CSs' subcategories employed by EFL learners.

TABLE 5. Communicative strategy subcategories used by EFL learners

Communicative Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Avoidance (Reduction) Strategies		
Message abandonment	236	27%
Topic avoidance	0	0
Achievement (Compensatory) Strategies		
Circumlocution	0	0
Approximation	0	0
Use of all-purpose words	0	0
Word coinage	0	0
Non-linguistic means	0	0
Foreignising	0	0
Code-switching	448	51%
Appeal for help	25	3%
Literal translation	0	0
Stalling (Time-gaining) Strategies		
Use of fillers	166	19%
Total	875	100%

As Table 5 shows, a total of 875 CSs were found in the speaking samples of 150 EFL learners during communicative-oriented class. Under the category of avoidance or reduction strategies, the message abandonment subcategory contained all of the 236 instances with 27% in total and the sub-category of topic avoidance was absent in this category. The sub-category of code-switching with 448 instances (51%) and appeal for help with 25 instances (3%) under the category of achievement or compensatory strategies were the other employed communicative strategies' sub-strategies, which were used by EFL learners. It is worth noting that its other sub-categories namely word coinage, circumlocution, approximation, use of the all-purpose words, foreignising, literal translation, and non-linguistic means were not applied at all. The use of fillers as the only sub-category of stalling or time-gaining strategies included 166 instances (19%).

Based on the detailed analysis, the sub-category of code-switching under achievement strategy or compensatory strategies was the most frequently used strategy by Iranian EFL learners. The following extracts are code-switching examples in teacher-learner interactions:

Extract 1

S: Absent or present?

T: What?

S: *Teacher man ghayeb budam (Teacher I was absent)*

T: Ok

Extract 2

S: There are milks in the supermarket.

T: There is...no are...there is. *Yadetun bashe hameye nushidaniharo ba is migim.*
 (Remember, you should use 'is' for all drinks)

Extract 3

S: Teacher, *be dasmalkaghazi ch migim?* (Teacher what is *Dasmal kaghazi* called in English?)

T: Tissue

Extract 4

S: Do safhe yay ek safhe? (Two pages or one page?)

T: Do safhe (two pages) ...Close the books... Please listen to me.

This finding can be attributed to the fact that code-switching under the umbrella term of achievement or compensatory strategy is a frequently used strategy by foreign language teachers and learners in their interactions. However, it should not be ignored that code-switching has turned out to be a more complicated issue in the EFL context since the foreign language acts as both the means and the end of interaction in EFL classes (Qian et al., 2009).

The use of L1 in EFL classes has always been the subject of debate in the history of language teaching. Some teaching methodologies, such as the Direct method and Audiolingualism, are against the use of L1 in the classroom (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). This avoidance has two psycholinguistic reasons. L1 learners do not have access to any other linguistic codes, yet mother tongue acquisition is fulfilled perfectly. However, considering the basic differences between the nature of the mother tongue and the second language, such a comparison between the two languages and drawing conclusions based on it does not seem logical and is not supported by the related theories. Furthermore, L1 and L2 entail separate systems in bilinguals' brains and simultaneous use of the two systems hinders language development (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017). The Communicative Approach to language teaching, as a more recent teaching method, also firmly asserts the idea of L1 avoidance in communicative teaching of the language (Pennycook, 1994). A major proponent of exclusive use of the target language was Krashen (1985) who emphasised the target language as the sole medium of instruction in language classes. For him, the mother tongue is a detractor in the acquisition of the new language. According to Paces (2003), the target language should be the only used language in the learning process because L1 use is a source of interference and results in transference error.

Second language acquisition theories advocating modified input and meaningful negotiation in a target language as a means of language learning do not support code-switching in language classes (Polio & Duff, 1994). Jefferies (1996) argues the issue from a sociolinguistic perspective referring to the socio-economical prestige of the target language and the integrative motivation of the teachers and learners to use it more frequently in class. However, the results of the present study are in congruence with those of Simasiku et al. (2015) which revealed teachers' sporadic use of the mother tongue to increase the comprehension of their learners, regardless of the social prestige of the target language.

From the socio-affective point, the proponents of monolingual teaching argue that exclusive use of the new language expands learners' language system development (Macaro, 2001) and improves their language learning motivation as a result of their immediate need to use the language in authentic and meaningful situations (Turnbull & Arnet, 2002). L1 exclusion also increases the target language use, which is of great importance, particularly in the EFL settings where language learning is limited to the academic context and language learners do not have any real exposure to the foreign language outside the class (Cook, 2001). This approach turns the class similar to the foreign language community in which the target language is the sole medium of communication (Macaro, 2001). The studies conducted on teacher code-switching have provided some guidelines for minimising the use of L1 in the classroom (Mugla & Seedhouse, 2005). Even if language learners do not know a word in the target language, they can communicate their intention using strategies such as body language, imitating sounds, coining new words, or describing their intention. These communication methods are examples of communication strategies. Unfortunately, these strategies are not explicitly taught in language classes because either the teachers are not aware of the learners' needs or they don't know how to train the learners to use them during communication. Some of these teachers do not even use these strategies frequently to be role models to their learners.

Some previous studies, on the other hand, reported the positive role of code-switching (Promnath & Tayjasanant, 2016; Simasiku et al., 2015) claiming that code-switching increases learners' understanding of the material as well as teachers' intentions and expectations besides improving the teaching quality and facilitating class management for teachers. Code-switching is helpful, in particular, for learners with low proficiency and performance (Promnath & Tayjasanant, 2016).

The present study also aimed at investigating the communicative strategies of Iranian EFL teachers. The related data are reflected in Table 6.

TABLE 6. Communicative strategies used by EFL teachers

Communicative strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Avoidance	45	11
Compensatory	102	26
Stalling	249	63

Based on the results, of 396 communicative strategies employed by language teachers, 11% (n=45) related to the avoidance or reduction strategy, 26% (n=102) belonged to the achievement or compensatory strategies, and 63% (n=249) were time-gaining or stalling strategies. Figure 2 visualises these relative frequencies.

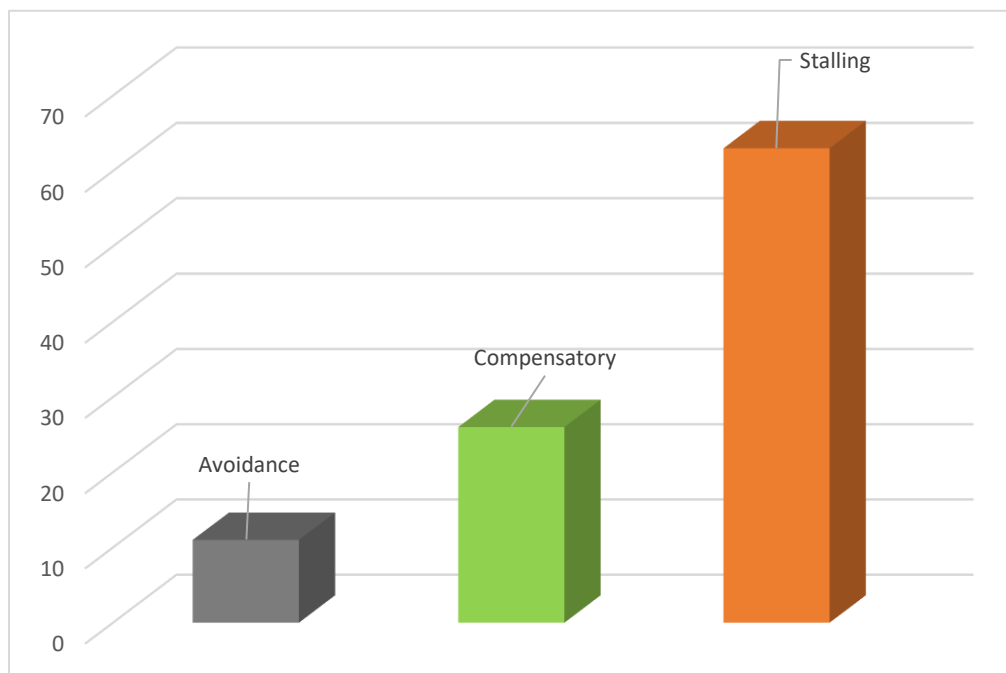


FIGURE 2. The rate of CSs use by EFL teachers

As presented in the figure, the strategy of stalling or time gaining was the most frequently employed strategy by the teachers. Avoidance, on the other hand, was the least used strategy by the EFL teachers with the compensatory communicative strategy placed between stalling and avoidance strategies. The details of each CSs' subcategories appear in Table 7.

TABLE 7. Communicative strategy subcategories used by EFL teachers

Communicative Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Avoidance or Reduction Strategies</i>		
<i>Message abandonment</i>	45	11
<i>Topic avoidance</i>	0	0
<i>Achievement or Compensatory Strategies</i>		
<i>Circumlocution</i>	20	5
<i>Approximation</i>	0	0
<i>Use of all-purpose words</i>	0	0
<i>Word coinage</i>	0	0
<i>Non-linguistic means</i>	0	0
<i>Foreignising</i>	0	0
<i>Code-switching</i>	67	17
<i>Appeal for help</i>	15	4
<i>Literal translation</i>	0	0
<i>Stalling or Time-gaining Strategies</i>		
<i>Use of fillers</i>	249	63
Total	396	100%

As Table 7 shows, a total of 396 CSs were observed in teacher-student interactions of 10 EFL classes. Under the category of avoidance or reduction strategies, the message abandonment subcategory contained 11% (n=45) of the instances while topic avoidance strategy from the same category was missing in interactions.

Within the category of achievement or compensatory strategies only three strategies of circumlocution with 5% (n=20), code-switching with 17% (n=67), and an appeal for help with 4% (n=15) application were observed in teachers' language use, and the other sub-categories of Achievement or Compensatory Strategy such as topic avoidance, use of all-purpose words, word coinage, non-linguistic means, and literal translation were not used by the EFL teachers at all. The use of fillers as the only sub-category of stalling or time-gaining strategy included 63% (n=249) of teacher strategy use.

Considering the ultimate goal of teachers educating their learners, it is expected that they take the advantage of every possible means to improve the quality and amount of learner interaction and eventually improve their language development. Resorting to the already developed language system of the learners is one of the most available resources where class members have a shared ethnic and linguistic background. This even gains higher importance in large size and mixed-ability classes (Carless, 2004). Code-switching is, therefore, deemed an invaluable strategy for language teachers (Kang, 2008) and as Polio and Duff (1994, p.315) argue "it may be unreasonable to expect the exclusive use of the target language in the classroom". The results of the current study revealed instances of EFL teachers' code-switching as well. Teachers seized on code-switching to compensate for the low proficiency level of the learners in EFL and to maintain the flow of inside classroom communication and even improve it.

The communicative strategy of stalling was high in frequency among the ten EFL teachers. Expressions such as "hmmm, well, in fact, as a matter of fact, actually" were common in teacher talk. These expressions are generally used to "fill pauses and to gain time to think" (Dornyei, 1995, p. 58). Teachers frequently used filler such as "actually", "in fact", and "as a matter of fact", while the learners mostly employed the fillers of "well", "Ummm...", and "hum". The former can be regarded as an extra explanation by teachers that can lead learners to learn, while the second one can be considered as a type of baffling on learners' turn. This is just an assumption and its validity can be distinguished by a think-aloud instrument such as interviews with both teachers and learners. The high frequency of usage may be attributed to the prevalent use of this particular

strategy in the mother tongue of these learners. Iranians use expressions such as “uh, hmmm, well, etc.” to sustain interaction in their first language and are already familiar with and used to this strategy. They tended to use it in English communications as well. Moreover, the high frequency of the stalling strategy in teachers’ talk can relate to classroom interaction management on the part of the teachers to maintain the conversation and support the communicational interactions in the class. Stalling strategies not only prevent the loss of speaking thread but also gives the speaking the required time to come up with the intended vocabulary items or grammatical structure. It, therefore, becomes helpful for the speakers by reducing the psychological pressure of spontaneous oral language production in the foreign. The following are examples of fillers as stalling strategies.

Extract 5

T: Which part didn't you write?
 S: *I Uhum...* wait, teacher...

Extract 6

T: What is this? Fruit? Vegetables? What are these?
 S: Um.....Oranges
 T: Ok. What are they? Are they vegetables?
 S: NO.....umm teacher....fruits... ..
 T: fruits. Please repeat fruit

Extract 7

S: Teacher there is two hamburgers.
 T: *well*, let's first pronounce it correctly Hamburgers...Repeat.... Hamburgers
 Ss: Hamburgers

The study went one step further and complemented its descriptive statistics with inferential statistics to present a more comprehensive picture of the communicative strategy use by teachers and learners in EFL class interactions. The third research question aimed at investigating the potential difference in communicative strategy use of EFL teachers and learners. To this end a Chi-square test was run, the results of which are presented in Table 8.

TABLE 8. Chi-square test of teacher/learner communicative strategy use

	CS rate
Chi-Square	.239.2638 ^a
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	0.0224

The chi-square shows $\chi^2 = 239.2638^a$, $df=1$ and $sig\ value=0.024$. Since the significant level is less than 0.05, then the result is significant at $p < .05$, hence the findings revealed a significant difference between teachers’ and learners’ use of communicative strategies. Comparing the frequencies of CS used by the teacher ($n=396$) and learners ($n=875$) it was concluded that students’ CS use was significantly higher than that of the teachers. The reason can go back to the high number of learners (150) in proportion to the instructors (10). The other justification can be related to the nature of the teacher’s talk. Since the teachers were mainly responsible for the instruction and asking questions to invite the learners to interact freely in the classroom, the amount of teacher’

free talk was highly restricted. Teacher talk time and student talk time balance is a matter of some debate. Generally, communicative-based language teaching approaches recommend minimised teacher talk in the classroom providing time for learner talk to give them maximised opportunities to practice and produce language. However, based on input theory providing comprehensible input to learners improves language comprehension and learning. The approaches taken by teachers form their beliefs about learning, their roles, and the amount of their talk in class. Therefore, it is equally important to consider the quality and the quantity of the teacher's talk. This can adjust the difference in categories of CSs frequently used by the EFL teacher and learner groups. As the results in the tables show, the students used compensatory or achievement strategies such as code-switching strategy more than the teacher, while teachers used more stalling or time-gaining strategies such as fillers which can be attributed to the roles they perform in the educational context as well as the learners' lower proficiency levels compared to the teachers'.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of the current study was to explore the communicative strategies use pattern of Iranian EFL learners and teachers based on Dornyei's taxonomy and to look for any significant difference between teachers' and learners' CS use. The results of data analysis indicated that the compensatory strategy was the most highly used strategy among the strategies employed by EFL learners in the communicative-oriented context of the classrooms. Moreover, stalling or time gaining strategy was the least frequently used strategy by the EFL students with the avoidance communicative strategy placed between stalling and compensatory strategies. In terms of teacher strategy use, the strategy of stalling or time gaining was the highly used strategy among the strategies used by the teachers. Furthermore, the strategy of avoidance was the low-frequently used strategy by the EFL teachers with the compensatory communicative strategy placed between stalling and avoidance strategies. Comparing teacher and learner strategy use patterns and frequency a significant difference was found in teachers' and learners' use of communicative strategies.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that critical analysis of the EFL class discourse reveals valuable information on the nature, and functions of the teacher and learners' interactions particularly from the perspective of strategy use serving various communicative purposes. As revealed in this research, the teachers made considerable efforts to maintain the flow of conversation using time-gaining strategies and in fact, they supported the learners to learn slowly with no time pressure, which greatly supported the process of communication. Such a high amount of strategy use presents the teachers' attempt to sustain verbal communication as a source of motivation for learner involvement in interactions. Moreover, generally, EFL learners of this study tried to compensate for communication breakdowns using different strategies even though they also attempted to use message avoidance strategy.

These findings highlight the importance of consciousness-raising about the functions and usefulness of communicative strategies in language learners so that they become motivated to use appropriate strategies at various stages of their foreign language learning. EFL teachers also need to be constantly reminded of the salient role of communicative strategies in learners' language development. These communicative strategies act as a helpful tool kit for learners which can be applied whenever they encounter communication breakdowns. The more equipped the learners are, the more competent they will be in their communications. Teachers need to shift the focus of

their attention from developing mere linguistic competence in their learners to fostering communicative competence by teaching them different types of communicative strategies, the proper time, and the appropriate amount of their use. The more the strategies the learners know; the more opportunities they have to communicate efficiently because they help learners overcome inadequacy in their linguistic resources and communicate their intended messages. Furthermore, teachers should manage classroom interactions in a way to motivate the learners to actively apply the learned strategies for more successful communication. This can be fulfilled by choosing specific topics, asking strategic questions, and providing the learners with comprehensible input. For all these purposes, teachers need to pay deliberate attention to the amount and pattern of communicative strategy use by their learners in the actual learning setting of the classroom and decide on the best means of improving their strategic competence for pedagogical purposes. Teacher training courses can also play a pivotal role in raising the teachers' awareness of their learners' strategy repertoire and their interactional skills in the classroom, and equipping the teacher with the necessary devices for managing their learners' communication problems.

Material developers and course syllabus designers should take into account the importance of communicative strategies and incorporate them into each educational syllabus in language programs and design the coursebook materials and tasks with the aim of fostering the development of communicative strategies. Specific teaching materials and tasks on strategy training that focuses on increasing learners' awareness of helpful communicative strategies can help them to compensate for their lack of proficiency and improve their communicational interactions for the intended purposes. A variety of tasks and activities aiming at both accuracy and fluency can guide learners toward efficient use of strategies. Given some systematic guidelines on the types of strategies and the best means of their application, learners gradually develop autonomy in their language learning as well as their language use. Since communicative strategies play a significant role in reaching proficiency within a new language, it is worth paying particular attention to their function, use, and training in educational systems including foreign language teaching. Complementary studies can shed more light on the findings of this study providing new information on how CSs use and training are influenced by learners' age and proficiency level as well as teachers' power, experience, and expertise, along with the socio-cultural factors of the teaching-learning context.

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