Epitome : International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research

ISSN : 2395-6968

IMPARTING STRATEGIES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO ESL LEARNERS

Dr. K. Thomas Baby

Assistant Professor, Department of Language and Translation,

Dhofar University, Salalah, OMAN

Email: kthomasbaby@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT : *This paper attempts to figure out the communication problems of ESL (**English as a second language**) speakers by analyzing critically some of the important aspects of their communication such as how second language speakers actually communicate in given situations and what is the structure of their spoken utterances. The study aims to find out why learners usually employ formal written structures in their communication and how variations in meanings can be brought about by structure and intonation of an utterance. The study also examines in detail various typologies of communication in order to enhance the communicative and pragmatic competence of ESL learners. Finally, the study recommends several effective language learning activities such as matching, sequencing, dialogues, discussions, debates, puzzles, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks. If such activities are conducted with proper communication strategy applications, ESL learners will be able to communicate effectively in real life situations.*

KEYWORDS : *Communication strategies; pragmatic competence; ESL learners; teaching and learning; meaning and structure; spoken discourse.*

RESEARCH PAPER

Introduction

A rational and realistic integration of the skills of comprehension (reading & listening) and the skills of expression (writing & speaking) are of vital importance to any ELT curriculum. A critical evaluation of the existing ELT curriculum in general reveals that the primary focus of most ELT curriculum is centred on the description and teaching of written language. This has resulted in a total neglect of the spoken language, often to the point of failing to demarcate the difference between formal written expressions and naturally occurring discourses in the communicative contexts of real life situations. Likewise, regarding the skills of comprehension, reading is assigned a place of prominence while listening is relegated to the background. The undue emphasis on writing and reading skills often affects the listening and speaking skills adversely. This obvious imbalance in the curriculum is due to the fact that reading and writing skills are easy to be taught under the controlled conditions of a classroom. Moreover, structured materials and standardized testing and assessment tools are available in plenty in these two skill areas. Furthermore, they can be administered with the simple devices of pen and paper. Lack of standardized materials and accurate testing and assessment tools are the major reasons for the neglect of teaching effectively speaking and listening skills to ESL learners.

In order to examine the structure of spoken English among educated second language speakers, a set of pre-fabricated sentences with possible alternatives of conversational language using particles and phrasal verbs were administered to a group of nursing students who had undergone nearly six hundred hours of language instruction during their Foundation Course. Finally the result of the survey is analyzed in the light of various communication theories in order to understand effective communication strategies.

Analysis of the problem

The teaching of speaking and listening skills incorporated in today's ELT curriculum fails to develop the communicative and pragmatic competence of the learners to interact effectively in real life situations. This drawback in the curriculum may not obviously produce an adverse effect so long as the learner interacts only within his ethnic community. This is due to the fact that the learner's interaction is limited to people with similar linguistic behaviour confined to that particular homogeneous

society. Moreover, in such situations, expressions of written language may usefully serve the purpose of communication. However, the neglect of the skills of listening and speaking will have a direct and adverse impact on the learner, when he/she has to operate in a multi-cultural environment. In this context, the learner might experience difficulties in comprehending the utterances of speakers from a different social and cultural orientation. Furthermore, the application of written expressions in such situations may fail to serve the purpose of effective communication.

Since comprehension and legibility are the basic parameters of any communication test, second language speakers who are not exposed to the nuances of spoken English may often face difficulties with regard to the pragmatic aspects of communication. This happens when they interact with people from diverse linguistic backgrounds including native speakers of English. In this analysis, the emphasis is placed not on the actual delivery of speech but on the structure of spoken expressions and the consequent breakdown in communication. Though intonation and accent are vital to the cumulative effect of an utterance, they are not given elaborate treatment as the emphasis is on the structure of the spoken discourse. However, with regard to the phonetic features of the utterance, the internationally accepted Received Pronunciation (British R.P) is taken to be the ideal goal.

Communication in specific contexts

Teaching effective communication strategies to ESL learners demands a critical analysis of how they actually communicate in given contexts. Furthermore, it is extremely important to understand the structure of their utterances. Most importantly, it is necessary to examine and analyze how the language of a learner is different from that of a native speaker. The most singular difference in the communicative act of a learner and that of a native speaker is related to the structure of their utterances. While native speakers employ particles and phrasal verbs in ample measure in their conversation, ESL speakers have a marked preference for single word verbs.

In order to test this hypothesis a survey was conducted using a set of pre-fabricated sentences with single word verbs along with alternative sentences using particles and phrasal verbs. This was administered to a group of nursing students who have undergone nearly six hundred hours of language instruction during their Foundation Course. The participants were asked to mark their choice from the alternatives in their act of communication. A number of specific contexts relating to academic situations and day-today interactions in real life were chosen for this purpose. Fifty students

were selected at random from students who completed their foundation course. Later, a follow-up analysis session was arranged to discuss the result of the survey and to ascertain the reasons for their choice of single word verbs instead of phrasal verbs and particles. All the example sentences given below in this instance are taken from the book Phrasal Verbs and Idioms by Workman (1993).

Academic situations

Can I **give** you my homework tomorrow?

Can I **hand in** my homework tomorrow?

Can you **check** my homework?

Can you **go through** my homework?

Could we **postpone** our meeting until tomorrow?

Could we **put off** our meeting until tomorrow?

I must **begin** work.

I must **get down to** work.

I didn't **pass** the exam.

I didn't **get through** the exam.

I **passed** my History exam with only 54%.

I **scraped through** my history exam with only 54%.

Can I **write down** your name and address?

Can I **take down** your name and address?

She's **remaining at the same level** as the other students in the class.

She's **keeping up** with the other students in the class.

Everyone in class is studying well, but I'm **getting worse.**

Everyone in class is studying well, but I'm **falling behind**

I must **reach the same level** as the other students in my class.

I must try to **catch up with** the other students in my class.

Situations from day-today interactions

The room looks terrible. It really needs **decorating.**

The room looks terrible. It really needs **doing up.**

The cooker doesn't work. It needs **repairing.**

The cooker doesn't work. It needs **seeing to.**

We could **start living** here immediately.

We could **move in** here immediately.

We **discussed** the problem yesterday.

We **talked over** the problem yesterday.

I must **stop** eating chips.

I must **cut out** eating chips.

I've **started playing** golf as a hobby.

I've **taken up** golf as a hobby.

I **recovered consciousness** a few seconds later.

I **came round** a few seconds later.

I can't **tolerate** that noise any longer.

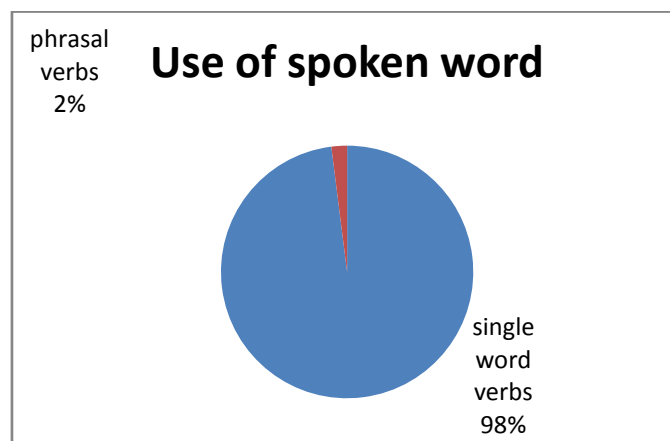I can't **put up with** that noise any longer.

We **leave** our flat on Friday.

We **move out** on Friday.

The curtains don't **match** the wallpaper.

The curtains don't **go with** the wallpaper.

The result of the survey

Nearly ninety eight percent of the participants in the survey invariably opted for single word verbs rather than sentences with phrasal verbs and particles in both academic and real life situation sentences. In the follow up analysis and discussion session, the participants gave various reasons for their choice of single word verbs instead of phrasal verbs. Most of the participants said they were sure of the meaning of single word verbs while they were not very sure of the meaning of the phrasal verbs. Many of the participants declared that they were not familiar with the use of phrasal verbs because they rarely used them in their ELT classes or during their interactions with people within or outside their classroom context. Furthermore, they claimed that in a given situation the single word verbs came to their mind rather easily. In addition to the above reasons cited by most of the participants, some of the participants who had better language skills were of the opinion that it was rather confusing for them to opt for phrasal verbs because it could be used with different meanings in different contexts.

Reasons for the application of formal structures

The result of the survey and the follow up discussion with the participants revealed positively that second language speakers instinctively choose formal written structures in their act of communication. The findings from the survey and the discussion about application of formal structures using single-word verbs in conversation by ESL speakers can be summarized as follows.

- *Since second language speakers learn writing first, when the need arises for speaking, they tend to use written expressions.*

- *Materials designed for speaking skills in ELT curriculum are mostly structured for general applications unsuitable for specific situations.*

- *For clarity of expression and to avoid confusion arising from the use of phrasal verbs, second language speakers always prefer single word verbs even in informal situations where verb particles are more appropriate.*

- *Since vocabulary learning is an important part of second language learning, they look for content words in the act of communication.*

- *A Phrasal verb can have different meanings in different contexts according to its use. This can be very confusing to a second language learner.*

- *Intonation patterns can give different shades of meaning to the same sentence according to the need of the speaker. This often causes difficulties to a learner.*

In short, this survey revealed that the choice of single word verbs by ESL speakers is a by-product of the undue influence of writing and reading skills in their ELT curriculum. This underlines the need and necessity for ***restructuring the syllabus*** for speaking skills by focussing more attention on the pragmatic aspect of the language and the teaching of ***effective communication strategies*** to ESL learners.

Restructuring the syllabus

The preference of ESL learners for single word verbs in their act of communication points to the general problem of all the second language speakers. When a second language speaker wants to communicate in a given situation, a written structure immediately comes to his mind. In most cases, he tries to translate his thoughts into a written structure. This is due to the fact that most ELT materials for listening and

speaking skills, usually teach spoken English in generalised structures. When such structures are applied in informal discourses of actual life situations, they need not necessarily fit into the given contexts. Hence, there is a difference in the structure of spoken discourse used by an educated second language speaker and a native speaker. Moreover, the ESL speakers need more time to translate their thoughts into spoken utterances. This can often cause communication breakdown in conversational contexts. In order to rectify the problem of using single word verbs by L2 learners in informal discourses where phrasal verbs are more appropriate, it is necessary to restructure the present ESL/EFL curriculum. This restructuring can be done effectively by incorporating the pragmatic aspects of spoken discourses while designing the syllabus for speaking skills. The focus of the present curriculum is on providing written formats for spoken utterances without taking into account the dynamic nature of spoken words. There are two serious drawbacks for this method. Firstly, the same sentence can have different shades of meaning based on the nature and context of the utterance. Secondly, when the same sentence is spoken with different intonation patterns, it can have different meanings. A learner may often find it difficult to distinguish these subtle differences. In order to distinguish such subtle differences of meaning based on structure and intonation, it is necessary to incorporate the pragmatic aspects of language while designing the syllabus for speaking skills. The importance of pragmatic skills in communicative competence is illustrated with examples in the following sections.

i)   Variation of meaning based on structure and context

The pragmatic aspect of language is vital to the teaching of any spoken discourse. When learners employ written structures for communicative purposes, they fail to understand the distinction between written language and spoken discourses. The inadequacy of generalised structures for speaking skills can be illustrated with some simple examples. Let us take the case of two close friends who are both second Language speakers of English. One of them visits the other at his place. How will the former offer his help to the other to carry his bag or to get him a taxi. If he applies his theoretical knowledge of the language he would say one of the following:

Would you like me to carry your bag?

Shall I carry your bag?

Can I carry your bag?

All the three sentences are structurally correct and can be used as offers of help. The first two offers are definitely devoid of the elements of intimacy and informality needed in the dialogue between two close friends. The third option may sound even offending to a discerning listener. In this context none of the above statements can match the appropriateness of the following sentence.

"Give me your bag - I will carry it"

One may not find this expression in a textbook on speaking skills for *offering help* because the general rule is to use an auxiliary such as *would, shall, can* or *Let.*

Another instance can be getting a taxi. Our theoretical knowledge may prompt us to use one the following:

Would you like me to get a taxi?

Shall I get you a taxi?

Can I get you a taxi?

The above options are also impersonal.

"I will get you a taxi" – is obviously a better choice in this context. This too may not figure in a textbook on speaking skills.

The formal structure of offers starting with auxiliaries can be sometimes offending to a person who is really in need of help.

In such cases *"I will help you"* is better than *"Shall I help you".*

Similarly, if you say:

"Would you like me to pay the bill?" Or *"Shall I pay the bill."*

Your friend might feel that you don't want to pay. Here again it is better to say:

"I will pay the bill." Or *"Let me pay the bill."*

This is also true of invitations. The formal structure that is taught for invitations can appear redundant in many situations.

"We would like to invite you for dinner next Sunday."

This is formally right, but it lacks the warmth and cordial informality usually seen between close friends. The following sentence would be more suitable for the occasion.

"Join us for dinner next Sunday."

As an invitation is usually accompanied by an auxiliary verb, you may not find this expression in a standard textbook.

ii)   Variation of meaning based on intonation

In spoken English, variations of meaning in the same utterance can be brought about by different patterns of intonation. A second language speaker who is not exposed to the nuances of spoken English used by native speakers may find it difficult to understand and make use of such devices in his/her conversation.

Intonation plays a prominent role in spoken discourses. It can have different uses in conversational contexts. According to Kenworthy (1987) intonation patterns can be employed to give different shades of meaning to the same sentence. Some of its important uses are the following.

- ***Intonation is used to show whether a situation is basically open or closed.*** A high rising tone at the end is used for situations open for negotiation or confirmation. A good example is the conversational OK people often use. Likewise, a high rising pitch at the end is used when something is reserved or kept back. e.g. I like his wife, (but not him).

- ***Intonation is used to show involvement.*** Noises made on quite high or even high rising pitch usually shows more involvement. e.g. yes-yes-ah.

- ***Intonation is used to show expectations.*** The best example of this is the use of tag questions. If we say, "He doesn't know, does he?" with a falling pitch on the tag, we expect the answer to be: "No, he doesn't" which means confirmation or agreement. Here, we are showing through the use of our voice that we have some information that we are quite sure is correct.

- ***Intonation is used to show feelings.*** The conventional polite way of inviting someone's attention 'Excuse me' is spoken in a normal pitch in ordinary situations. The aim is just to invite the attention of someone to make a request. In formal situations when you want to accost a dignitary through a pressing audience to the stage or to make a request to the public to be silent or to make way for the dignitary, a higher than usual starting pitch and a final rising pitch is used to show one's respect to the status of the dignitary.

A second language speaker may find these intricacies of intonation rather confusing. O'Connor (1967) says English intonation is ***English.*** It is completely different from the intonation of any other language. There is a common belief that intonation is the same for all languages, but this is far from reality. English has its unique English tunes, and these are completely different from the normal tunes of any other language.

In addition a learner must learn the meanings as well in order to understand English intonation in its true sense. For example ***Thank you*** may be said in two ways. If the voice starts high and ends low while speaking, it shows real gratitude. On the other hand, if the voice starts low and ends high, it shows a rather casual acknowledgement of something not very important. Thanking a friend for his invitation is a good example of the first instance. Saying thanks at a post office is an example of casual acknowledgement of something unimportant.

In the opinion of Roach (1983) the only efficient way to learn to use the intonation of a language is through careful listening and imitation of a native speaker's intonation. In other words it should be done in the same way a child learns its first language. Therefore, an adult learner of English should acquire English intonation in a similar (though much slower) way – through listening to and talking to English speakers. Roach (1983) further says it is perhaps discouraging to say that learners of English who are not able to talk regularly with native speakers of English, or who do not get an opportunity to listen regularly to colloquial or spoken English, may not learn English intonation. On the other hand, it may be possible to learn very good pronunciation of the segments and use stress correctly without necessarily interacting or listening to native speakers regularly.

According to linguists, learning English intonation is difficult for second language speakers. At the same time it is vital to language learning activity because intonation patterns can give different shades of meaning to the same sentence. Since speaking is a skill unique to each individual, a generalised syllabus for speaking skills is not sufficient enough to ensure the desired result. Therefore, it is necessary to restructure the existing syllabus for speaking skills by focussing more attention on the dynamic nature of spoken words. It can be achieved by incorporating specific activities to develop pragmatic skills and by providing clearly marked out practice sessions for learning intonation patterns in the ELT curriculum. In order to understand the dynamics of spoken utterances and to solve the challenges of communication faced by L2 speakers, it is necessary to restructure the present ELT syllabus. In addition, recent researches have shown that teaching effective communication strategies is the best solution for the communication problems encountered by most ESL learners. In order to develop communicative competence, learners should acquire pragmatic skills and communication strategies and employ them appropriately. Pragmatic skills and communication strategies are the most important components for sustaining

interaction with others. The following section deals with the vital question of the effectiveness of teaching communication strategies in order to develop the pragmatic skills of L2 speakers.

Teaching effective communication strategies

The most important aim of learning a language is to acquire the ability to communicate successfully in that language. Communicative action is not merely speech acts of language components but it demands participation in conversation by engaging in different types of discourse leading to active and sustaining interaction with others. This can happen only when we employ effective communication strategies in the process of transferring ideas or messages to another person. ESL speakers often find themselves in situations where they fail to transfer their ideas effectively. According to Bialystok (1990) there are multiple reasons for such communication breakdown encountered by L2 speakers. He says: "the familiar ease and fluency with which we sail from one idea to the next in our first language is constantly shattered by some gap in our knowledge of a second language". The L2 speaker can achieve communicative competence only when he/she overcomes these gaps which can be in the form of a word, a structure, a phrase, a tense marker or an idiom. In this context, teaching verbal or non verbal communication strategies can meet the challenges of breakdown in communication arising from performance variables or insufficient competence. The debatable question is whether strategic competence in communication is teachable or is there a need to teach them.

It is universally accepted that if an ESL learner wants to communicate successfully in a target language, his/her pragmatic competence in L2 must be well developed. However, many linguists believe that it need not be taught separately as it develops naturally along with linguistic competence. For example, Kasper says: "pragmatic competence as one of the goals for L2 learning does not necessarily imply that pragmatic ability requires any special attention in language teaching…. because perhaps pragmatic knowledge simply develops alongside lexical and grammatical knowledge, without requiring any pedagogic intervention". Many linguists believe that there is no justification in teaching strategies in isolation because communication strategies are natural expressions integrated closely with the process or the act of communication. Just as a child learns his first language by listening to the language, an adult learner must learn the language and not the strategy as Bialystok (1990) says "what one must teach students of a language is not strategy, but language."

If these views are accepted, how can we account for the communication problems faced by many ESL learners who have very good lexical and grammatical knowledge? This question is partially answered by Kasper in the following statement. "Indeed, adult NNS (ESL learners) do get a considerable amount of L2 pragmatic knowledge for free. This is because some pragmatic knowledge is universal, and other aspects may be successfully transferred from the learners' L1". Even if this view is accepted, it doesn't rule out the need for pedagogic intervention and explicit instruction to meet the challenges of communication gaps faced by ESL learners. Moreover, these ideas take into account only the cognitive processes involved in communication strategies.

Typologies of Communication Strategies

There are numerous proponents who advocate direct teaching of communication strategies to L2 learners. Prominent among them are O'Malley and Chamot (1990) who advocate pedagogic intervention by direct training of communication strategies. They claim that students should be apprised of the goals of strategy instruction and should be made aware of the strategies they are being taught because they believe that communication strategies are an adaptation to the failure to realize a language production goal. Similarly scholars like Wenden (1991) and Oxford (1990) underline the necessity and usefulness of informed training as a necessary concomitant of successful learning activity. Wenden (1991) says informed learners are the real learners. According to him they have acquired the learning strategies, the knowledge about learning and the attitudes that enable them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher. Similarly, Oxford (1990) is of the view that communication strategies are learning strategies employed by ESL learners to control and improve their own learning. These strategies help learners to gain new information about what is appropriate and make them more fluent in the target language.

Teaching communication strategies to L2 learners is therefore not only a need in the ESL classroom context but it is a necessity in order to avoid communication breakdown in the target language. The direct instruction of communication strategies to L2 learners can have multiple benefits. Primarily, it teaches them how to cope with communication difficulties and helps less proficient learners to have necessary tools to keep a conversation going. Moreover, it provides the opportunity to enhance their repertoire of language skills. Numerous researchers have vindicated these facts

through their research. Brett (2001) observed that pupils incorporated some communication strategies they had been taught into their L2 speaking and used a wide range of social strategies in interactions with one another. Furthermore, they showed an awareness of the workings of such interactions. Therefore, an awareness of the communication strategies and their conscious application is the primary condition for achieving fluency in a second language.

Initially, the awareness of the strategies may not bring in the desired result in communicative situations but conscious and continuous application of these strategies can bring in and develop natural communication skills in a learner. Such conscious repetitions by the learners result in getting these strategies embedded in their unconscious psyche and help them to overcome the gaps in their communication. Hence, researchers like Lam (2006) and Campillo (2006) underline the effectiveness of communication strategy teaching on learners' performance and strategy use on task effectiveness. Campillo (2006) focuses more on compensatory strategies employed by learners to cope with problematic vocabulary to solve gaps in communication to keep the flow of conversation. Therefore, teaching communication strategies to L2 learners is inevitable for the successful acquisition of the target language. Based on this assumption, various communication strategies were formulated by different linguists. Therefore, a brief analysis of some of the prominent typologies of communication strategies and their effectiveness is an inevitable part of this discussion.

According to Jorda (1997) the notion of second language communication strategies first appeared in Selinker's (1972) article on interlanguage. Subsequently, Váradi (1973) and Tarone (1977) formulated a more scientific analysis of communication strategies which was based on Selinker's notion and provided an effective set of communication strategies for subsequent research. Tarone's taxonomy provided the best tool to analyze the behaviour of her subjects in specific communicative situations. Jorda (1997) further says that Tarone herself pointed out some of the drawbacks of her taxonomy but many subsequent researchers have adapted her typology and formulated other strategies. This peculiar scenario gave rise to the existence of a confusing array of different communicative strategies of ambiguous validity. In the opinion of Bialystok (1990) the numerous taxonomies formulated by different critics differ primarily in terminology and overall categorizing principles. There isn't any significant difference in the substance of specific strategies. Taking into account various typologies proposed and the effectiveness of their applications, Jorda (1997)

finally presents a detailed taxonomy of communication that emerged from all the above stated conceptualizations and specific strategies (pp2-4).

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES	EXPLANATION OF STRATEGY

A. Avoidance or Reduction Strategies

1. Message abandonment	Leaving a message unfinished because of linguistic difficulties
2. Topic avoidance	Avoiding topic areas or concepts which pose linguistic difficulties.

B. Achievement or Compensatory Strategies

1. Circumlocution	Describing or exemplifying target object or action (e.g., the thing you open doors with for key).
2. Approximation	Using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target lexical items as closely as possible (e.g. ship for sail boat).
3. Use of all-purpose words	Extending a general empty lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking (e.g. overuse of thing).
4. Word-coinage	Creating a non existing L2 word based on a supposed rule (e.g. paintist for painter).
5. Use of nonlinguistic means	Mime, gesture, facial expression.
6. Literal translation	Translating literally a lexical item an idiom, a compound word or structure from L1 to L2.
7. Foreignizing	Using an L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonologically (e.g. adding an L2 suffix).
8. Code switching	Using an L1 word with L1 pronunciation.
9. Appeal for help	Turning to the conversation partner for help directly or indirectly

C. Stalling or time gaining strategies

1. Use of fillers/hesitation devices	Using filling words or gambits to fill in pauses and to gain time to think (e.g. now, let me see...).

According to Jorda (1997) in the second half of the 1980s, prominent researchers like Bongaerts, Kellerman and Poulisse pointed out that the existing typologies of communication strategies suffered from the drawback of explaining strategy types with single or isolated examples instead of demonstrating how these typologies could be applied to cohesive speech or writing. Moreover, they tended to be more product-oriented than process oriented which is essential for language learning. Furthermore, these critics were of the opinion that these typologies were essentially descriptive and

suffered from two major deficits. The first is the failure to distinguish the psychological process from the linguistic product and the second is the failure to account for the linguistic and non-linguistic constraints that influence the choice of a particular strategy. As a result, these critics advocated a different taxonomy of communication strategies which gave more focus on identifying the cognitive processes that underlie the choice of a strategy.

Subsequently, they proposed a process-oriented typology reflecting three fundamental conditions. The first condition is its *psychological plausibility*, which emphasized that the strategies incorporated in this taxonomy should be compatible with cognitive processing and problem-solving behaviour. The second condition is *parsimony* which upheld minimum possible strategy types relevant for the data collected for identifying and solving specific communication problems. Finally, the third condition insisted that taxonomy should be *generalisable* across tasks, items, languages and learners. This condition underlined that no strategies should be uniquely associated with certain tasks or certain items.

Poulisse (1990) criticized the above typology by arguing that the difference between conceptual and linguistic strategies is essentially one and the same. They do not refer to different or unrelated processes involved in the production of these strategies. Apart from this, Poulisse (1990) also shows the differences in the processes underlying analytic and holistic conceptual strategies. In relation to the differences in these strategies and considering the processes involved in the use of linguistic transfer strategies, Poulisse (1990) further says that holistic strategies are more similar to linguistic transfer strategies than to conceptual analytic strategies. Therefore, she presented a different typology which was similar to Levelt's (1989) model of speech production consisting of three components.

The first is a cognitive component known as *conceptualizer* which produces preverbal messages which are transferred to a linguistic component named the *formulator*. Subsequently, the *formulator* encodes them grammatically and phonologically through its access to a lexicon that can give the messages linguistic forms. Finally, it goes to the *articulator*, which is capable of producing the messages. Poulisse (1990) says that her taxonomy is very reliable because it is based on the psycholinguistic model of speech production mentioned above. A brief analysis of the typologies of communication strategies presented above can become useful only if they can be taught and practiced in specific classroom contexts. Furthermore, the teaching of

these strategies should enable the learners to apply and use them effectively in situations of real life.

Framework for teaching communication strategies

The most challenging task in teaching communicative strategies to ESL learners is the selection or choice of appropriate strategies that are useful for them in specific situations. Several factors are to be taken into consideration when selecting the strategies appropriate for particular group of students. According to Bialystok (1990) three potential factors are vital in the choice of communication strategies. They are L2 proficiency level, the features of the communicative situation and the nature of the task. In addition to these, some researchers take into consideration other factors like the social context and the learners' cultural background.

Littlemore (2001) goes further to claim that even learners' cognitive styles contribute to determine their communication strategy preferences. In his view learners with a holistic cognitive style when faced with gaps in their target language lexis, favour comparison based strategies, whereas learners with an analytic cognitive style focus on the individual features of the target item. Therefore there is no single strategy or universal solution for dealing with the communication problems of L2 speakers. Such problems need to be dealt with a one to one format based on each specific situation. This method demands a very high level of discretion from the teacher. The teacher is required to apply the general tools and methods of imparting effective communication strategies that are best suited for each particular situation in the ESL teaching context unique to his/her specific classroom conditions.

Conclusion

The undue emphasis on writing skills in the ELT curriculum is largely responsible for the use of formal written expressions in informal conversations of second language speakers. Along with this, unfamiliarity with the nuances of spoken English in applied situations is another major problem. Moreover, second language speakers tend to use single word verbs rather than phrasal verbs or verbs with particles. This may promote clarity of communication, but the spoken discourse will become a formal structure devoid of the informal nature of conversational language. Finally, learners should be aware of the fact that modulation of voice and variations in intonation and accent can bring about changes in meaning.

In order to teach effective communication strategies, ESL learners should be introduced to the nuances of conversational language along with various types of daily discourses in normal daily life. Once the learner understands that daily discourse situations are completely different from the usual academic environment in which most of their interactions take place, ESL learners will be better equipped to acquire effective communication strategies. Taking into consideration the influence of various factors, no single strategy or typology is sufficient enough to meet the needs of a learner. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) suggest four learner training sequences for different learning situations. In this sequence, initially, learners are shown how to identify their current learning strategies. This is followed by an explanation of the rationale behind the application of these strategies. After this learners are given suitable materials for practice. Finally, learners are given opportunities to evaluate their success rate in practising the strategies.

Therefore, instead of recommending a fixed framework for communication strategy training, a number of instructional activities can be appropriately chosen and sequenced according to classroom settings. This can be done by grouping learners and providing each group with a specific communicative situation followed by practice sessions. Furthermore, teachers should figure out the most appropriate activities suited for specific conditions in each classroom to create communicative opportunities for learners to practice and learn. These activities should ultimately aim at filling in knowledge gaps of the learners. There are several effective language learning activities such as matching, sequencing, dialogues, discussions, debates, puzzles, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks. If such activities are conducted with proper communication strategy applications, ESL learners will be able to communicate effectively in real life situations.

Finally, the findings of this study are corroborated by two major recent studies. The first one is a doctoral thesis which studied the effects of teaching communication strategies on Thai Learners of English. In this study, Kongsom (2009) the researcher studied the effects of explicit teaching of communication strategies to 62 fourth year engineering students at King Mongkut's university who received a 12 week communication strategy-based instruction. According to the researcher, the students considered the taught strategies in communication strategy instruction useful, especially pause fillers and hesitation devices, approximation, self repair and circumlocution. The findings of the study showed that the students tended to be more

aware of the taught communication strategies. The second one is a study by Lam (2006) about the effects of ESL oral communication strategy teaching done at secondary ESL classrooms. This study also corroborated the fact that it is desirable to incorporate strategy-based instruction into the normal curriculum on a long-term basis to yield optimal results.

REFERENCES

Bialystok, E. (1990). *Communicative Strategies*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Brett, A. G. (2001). Teaching communication strategies to beginners. *Language Learning*

Journal, 24, 53-61.

Campillo, (LAELA) P. S. (2006). The use of circumlocution in the foreign language context. *Porta Linguarum, 5*, 7-15.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, 1*, 1-47.

Dornyei, Z. (1995). On the teachability of communication strategies. *TESOL Quarterly,*

29 (1), 55-86.

Dornyei, Z., & Scott, M. L. (1997). Communication strategies in a second language: Definitions and taxonomies. *Language Learning, 47* (1), 173-210.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: OUP.

Jorda, M. P. S. (1997). Some comments on the existing typologies of communication strategies: Its effect on the interpretation of empirical findings. *Jornades de Foment de la Investigació. (pp4-8)* Retrieved January 12, 2014 from www.uji.es/bin/publ/edicions/jfi2/

Kasper, G. (1989). Interactive procedures in interlanguage discourse. In W. Oleksy (Ed.), *Contrastive pragmatics*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Kenworthy, Joanne (1987). Teaching English Pronunciation. Longman: London.

Kongsom, Tiwaporn (2009) The effects of teaching communication strategies on Thai learners of English. *University of Southampton, School of Education, Doctoral Thesis,* 363pp.

Lam, W.Y.K. (2006). Gauging the effects of ESL oral communication strategy teaching:

A multi-method approach. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching, 3* (2),

142-157. Retrieved January 10, 2014 from http://e-flt.nus.edu.sg/

Littlemore, J. (2001). An empirical study of the relationship between cognitive style and

the use of communication strategy. *Applied Linguistics, 22* (2), 241-265.

Maleki, A. (2010). Techniques to Teach Communication Strategies. *Journal of Language*

Teaching and Research, 1(5), 640-646.

O'Connor, J.D. (1967) Better English Pronunciation. London: CUP

O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A.U. (1990). *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: CUP.

Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies*: *What every teacher should know*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers.

Poulisse, N. (1990). The use of compensatory strategies by Dutch learners of English. Dordrecht: Foris/Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.

Roach, P. (1983) English Phonetics and Phonology. London: CUP

Tarone, E. (1977). *Conscious Communication Strategies in Interlanguage: A Progress Report*. On TESOL 1977. Washington, D.C: TESOL.

Wenden, A. L. (1991). Learning strategies for learner autonomy: Planning and implementing learner training for language learners. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall.

Workman, G. (1993) Phrasal Verbs and Idioms. London: CUP