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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of M.A.
In English Language Teaching

Title:
A Study of the Relationship between Proficiency Level and Communication Strategies Choice by Iranian EFL Learners

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January 2017
## Abstract

The present study investigated communication strategies (CSs) employed by Iranian EFL learners and aimed at revealing the relationship between language proficiency and the use of communication strategies. Learners with different proficiency levels interacted face-to-face when carrying out a task in which 32 interactions were elicited by means of video and audio recordings, observation of participants’ interactions and stimulated recall methodology. Quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted to investigate possible associations between CSs and proficiency levels. From the main results obtained, it was observed that at the most general level of analysis, the learners in this study favored the use of ‘resource deficit-related strategies’ and ‘processing time pressure-related strategies; the least used CS category was ‘other performance problem-related strategies’. The learners’ proficiency levels did affect their strategic use of the language, which was reflected in a differentiated use of CSs by each group. The primary and more general distinction had to do with a more frequent use of CSs on the part of the less proficient learners. Lower level learners mostly resorted to less cognitively demanding strategies than the higher ones. They relied more on stalling mechanisms, as for example, ‘repetition’ or ‘pauses’ in order to gain time to think of the appropriate language item. On the other hand, more proficient learners were more likely to employ more cognitively demanding strategies, such as self-repairs, own-accuracy check or approximation, among others.

## Keywords:
EFL, communication strategies, language proficiency level, resource deficit-related strategies, processing time pressure-related strategies, other performance problem-related strategies.
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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION
Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Overview

The interest in communication strategies (CSs hereafter) as mechanisms which aid L2 learners and users in trying to get their message across by making use of the linguistic resources available has been growing across different fields of enquiry (see, for example Kasper & Kellerman, 1997). From its origins in the 1970’s (Selinker, 1972) as part of Interlanguage studies to its subsequent development in second/foreign language (L2 henceforth) learning (Tarone, 1977; Færch & Kasper, 1983) and L2 language teaching (Canale & Swain, 1980) these strategies have been considered vital for L2 language use and learning.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The present study has been based on my own experience as L2 learner and EFL teacher, a foreign language context where the difficulties faced by learners in trying to communicate in an L2 are increased by the fewer opportunities to practise the target language, and thus develop their L2 oral communication skills. In addition, the need for teachers to cover all main receptive and productive skills within the L2 language class makes it even more difficult to focus on developing the learners’ communication skills necessary for coping with the different demands imposed within and outside the L2 classroom. In this respect, comprehensive projects, such as the ones assigned for the development of the ‘Common European Framework of Reference for language learning and teaching’, have attempted to clarify and specify what L2 learners and users are expected to achieve at the different learning stages. One of the main objectives of this Framework aimed at ‘specifying the full range of language knowledge, skill and use’ (quoted in Holec et al., 1996), which
included ‘the competences required by the language user or learner in communication and learning context’ (Holec, et al., 1996, p. 6). This implied that strategic competence constituted an important aspect to be researched and developed within this framework. It is noteworthy that a relevant and comprehensive project such as this one implemented strategic competence as part of the learning objectives to be considered in all educational systems in Europe. The inclusion of this aspect demonstrates the importance given to the various mechanisms or CSs necessary for the learners to overcome the problems arising in L2 communication, which at the same time emphasizes the importance of investigating this issue further. The fundamental motivation for this study, therefore, was to gain insight in the way that L2 learners manage to communicate by means of CSs by considering a certain factor which may affect their strategic use of the language. This further exploration may help to throw some light on the many difficulties that learners encounter when trying to communicate, and the different ways in which they use their own linguistic repertoire as well as their interlocutors’ resources to convey meaning. All this further insight may be a valuable contribution to L2 communication as well as the learning and teaching of second languages.

The difficulties faced by L2 learners in communicating have been widely investigated within the area of CSs. It has been demonstrated that learners of an L2 need more time than native speakers to process and express information, difficulties which are intensified by the learners’ lack of L2 resources, the type of meaning to be conveyed, and the situational or learning context, amongst other factors. However, they still manage or attempt to communicate, by stretching those resources and/or reducing, or simply abandoning, their message. They also make use of stalling mechanisms to gain time to think or remember the words they need to express meaning, in addition to resorting to paralinguistic devices to either communicate or complement their message.
Because of the complexities involved in L2 communication, various definitions and classifications of CSs have been proposed so far, most of which have addressed the issues of problematicity and consciousness in the strategic use of the language. That is, when learners find difficulties to convey their message it implies that they are aware of the problematic situations, and thus of their attempts to solve them. In addition, two theoretical frameworks have guided research in this field: the psycholinguistic (Færch & Kasper, 1983; Bialystok, 1990; Poulisse, 1993; Dörnyei & Kormos, 1998) and the interactional (Tarone et al., 1976; Tarone 1977; Corder 1983; Paribakht, 1985) perspectives. The former views CSs as a cognitive process and thus considers the learners’ internal processes for the identification of these mechanisms. The latter, on the other hand, is concerned with the learners’ performance and their cooperation in solving problems in communication. Although both perspectives focus on the analysis of the CSs in different ways, more recent studies have been able to incorporate both theories through the broadening of analytical frameworks, which include those mechanisms involving problems in the learner’s own performance in addition to those related to problems in the interlocutor’s output. This merging in the way of viewing and classifying CSs has also been evidenced in more recent methods used for their identification, which implemented the use of retrospection in order to account for those processes which are not observable through the learners’ output. This therefore allows the examination of the two kinds of processes which the different theoretical perspectives individually proposed to examine. This study draws from both these perspectives by utilizing a wider analytical framework, which covers mechanisms used for the solution of problems produced in the learners’ own output and those triggered by the interlocutor’s performance. Additionally, the elicitation of the learners’ retrospective comments immediately after their interactions in the L2 allowed me to explore the unobservable CSs and processes underlying the learners’ linguistic behaviour.

As already mentioned, extensive research has been done on CSs since the 1970’s, where it originated from Selinker’s work on ‘Interlanguage’, in which he referred to these devices as ‘one of the five central processes involved in L2 learning’ (1972, p. 215). Since
then there has been a great deal of research in this area, with English being one of the most studied second languages, and the lexical CSs have constituted the main focus of analysis (Si Qing, 1990; Littlemore, 2001; Fernández Dobao, 2002; Lee, 2004; Rababah, 2007). In addition, factors related to the use of these strategies have also been analysed, such as learners’ proficiency levels (Safont Jorda, 2001; Rababah & Seedhouse, 2004; Metcalfe & Noom-Ura, 2013), the tasks used for elicitation methods (Fernández Dobao, 2001; Rababah & Seedhouse, 2004; Rababah & Bulut, 2007; Khan & Victori, 2011), and the situational context (Williams, Inscoe & Tasker, 1997). A few other studies have also focused on analysing these CSs in interactional contexts (Fernández Dobao & Palacios Martínez, 2007; Nakatani & Goh, 2007). Finally, most research done so far has been used self-report questionnaires as the tool of assessing the learners’ proficiency level. In this study we use a reliable tool (i.e. a standard TOEFL test) to measure the learners’ proficiency level.

What most research has found so far indicates that lower level learners because of their lack of L2 linguistic resources encounter more problems to communicate, and thus need to use more CSs in order to compensate for those gaps. In contrast, higher level learners need to make use of fewer CSs as their more advanced knowledge of the L2 provide them the necessary resources to communicate meaning. It has also been observed that depending on the learners’ level of proficiency they tend to favor the use of certain CSs over others.

All this evidence therefore suggests the need to further investigate some issues in CS research, which are addressed in this study. Firstly, a wider range of strategies will be examined, as a way of expanding the analysis so far carried out by most studies on only the lexical problems experienced by learners. Secondly, the use of CSs by two groups of learners with different proficiency levels will be explored in order to see how far the proficiency level affects the patterns of CS use. Finally, the focus of this study on Iranian EFL learners will not only help to extend the knowledge on CSs but also to throw some more light on the intricacies of English as a second language.

1.3. Purpose of the Study
From above explanations, the purpose of this study becomes clearer. As the theoretical perspectives on this issue have been widely researched, what this work aims to do is to broaden the empirical existing evidence in relation to these mechanisms as being affected by proficiency level. The examination of the CSs used by learners with a different proficiency level also aims to expand the existing knowledge with regard to its effects on the learners’ CS usage.

Additionally, there is little research which has considered analysing the strategies used by both interlocutors in interactions.

1.4. Research Questions

As mentioned above, the primary purpose of this study is to investigate the way Iranian L2 learners of English manage to communicate via CSs in interactions with other learners. For this, learners of different proficiency levels will be observed when interacting with the researcher while carrying out a task. Thus, the main objective is to examine the learners’ strategic use of the target language as influenced by proficiency level. The results of the study would determine whether Iranian EFL learners’ level of proficiency would affect their choice of CSs or not. In order to achieve this goal, the following research questions are posed:

1) Which CSs are used more frequently by Iranian EFL learners?

2) What is the difference between high and low proficient learners in CS use?

1.5. Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested:

1) \( H_0 \): Iranian EFL learners do not use some CSs more frequent than others.

2) \( H_0 \): There is no difference between high and low proficient learners in CS use.

1.6. Significance of the Study
This study is expected to have theoretical and practical importance, as shown below:

Theoretical importance:

1. It is important to get an insight into the effect of proficiency level on student’s choice of CSs.
2. The study would help the teachers and students to extend their knowledge on CSs.
3. It can be said that this study – to the best of my knowledge – is the first one in Ardabil that uses a standard tool to determine proficiency level in order to investigate its effects on CS choice.

Practical importance:

1. The recommendations of the study would help Iranian students to overcome or at least reduce the difficulties that they encounter when trying to communicate using English inside and outside the classroom.
2. The video/audio recorded data available in this study of L2 learners communicating with the researcher via CSs, could serve as a starting point to be used in CS training, a teaching resource suggested by Dörnyei (1995) as way of ‘providing L2 models of the use of certain CSs’ (p. 63).
3. Learners at all levels may benefit particularly from the interactional type of CSs, in that through a collaborative strategic communication both speakers can help each other to get their message across, thus contributing to each other’s learning.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

The important terms used throughout this study are as follows:

Communication Strategies: ‘Conscious communication strategies are used by an individual to overcome the crisis which occurs when language structures are inadequate to convey the individual’s thought’ (Tarone, 1977, p. 195).
**Strategic Competence:** Strategic competence is ‘the learners’ ability to try out different means for solving any language-related problems whether in learning or in communication’ (Paribakht, 1985, p. 142).

**Metacognitive strategies:** Metacognitive strategies are ‘those processes that enable language users to engage in goal setting, assessment and planning’ (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 79).

**Interlanguage:** A ‘…separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner’s attempted production of a target language norm’ (Selinker, 1972, p. 214).

**Language proficiency:** Refers to one’s ability to use language for real world purposes to accomplish real world linguistic tasks, across a wide range of topics and settings.

**Interaction:** Two-way communication between language users, where they are engaged in exchanging information based on their own knowledge and experience. Munck and Mayer (2000) describe interaction as "the process of having a mutual effect, involving transferal of information with or without an intention behind it" (cited in Moura, 2006, p. 1).

**Resource deficit-related strategies:** The ‘resource deficit-related strategies’ have been defined as ‘problem-solving mechanisms employed when resource deficits hinder the planning and encoding of the preverbal plan’ (Dörnyei & Kormos, 1998, p. 358).

**Time pressure-related strategies:** These mechanisms are said to be used ‘in order to gain time and devote attention to [L2] processing’ (Dörnyei & Kormos, 1998, p. 357), which implies that the processing of an L2 requires more attentional resources and time than is required when using an L1.

**Own performance problem-related strategies:** As its name suggests, refers to ‘those mechanisms related to deficiencies in one’s own output, and whose main function has to do with the learners’ ability to monitor their own L2 speech’ (Dörnyei & Kormos, 1998, p. 358).
**Other performance problem-related strategies:** These CSs are triggered by problems with the interlocutor’s speech. They primarily reflect ‘the comprehension problems encountered by the learners when interacting with a higher level interlocutor and their focus is on ‘speech perception’ over ‘speech production’ processes’ (Dörnyei & Kormos, 1998, p. 358), as opposed to most of the other CS categories which are related to both types of processes.

1.8. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The research has a number of limitations and delimitations which warrant acknowledgement. The limitations of the study include these factors: limited number of sessions for data collection, lack of enough time during each session, and the strict rules of the language institutions.

The research has also two delimitations; the first one is related to the lack of a second researcher to help with CS identification. Hence, the question remains whether other CSs might be unnoticed in data that might change the results. The second delimitation of the study is about the generalizability of the results to other learners with other levels of proficiency as the all participants of this study were upper-intermediate learners of English. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other contexts and to participants at different proficiency levels.

1.9. Implications of the Study

This study gives several implications regarding the use of these CSs for teaching and learning purposes in the L2 classroom.

One of the first pedagogical implications which emerge from this study concerns the learners’ training in the use of CSs. Although there was certain controversy regarding the teaching of CSs during 1980’s, on the grounds that there is no need to teach CSs since learners already possess strategic means of communicating in their L1 (see Dörnyei, 1995 for details), later studies have advocated the benefits of direct CS use training (Dörnyei, 1995; Manchón, 2000; Faucette, 2001; Lam, 2006, 2010). They argue that instruction in the use of these strategies may develop learners’ autonomy in that they may more efficiently manage
their own L2 resources and be able to tackle problematic situations arising not only in the classroom but also in the real world (Manchón, 2000; Faucette, 2001). In view of this, the video/audio recorded data available in this study of L2 learners communicating with the researcher via CSs, could serve as a starting point to be used in CS training, a teaching resource suggested by Dörnyei (1995) as way of ‘providing L2 models of the use of certain CSs’ (p. 63). By doing this, those CSs which may be considered more effective in L2 communication can be used as examples for learners to analyse other L2 learners’ use of CSs, become aware of their benefits, and be able to employ them.

From the previous point regarding the debate on a direct instruction of these CSs, the benefits for tutors and students can be clearly drawn. In my opinion these mechanisms should be overtly taught within the L2 classroom as they may greatly favor the students’ oral production skills. This type of instruction may benefit particularly lower levels, in that they can gain more confidence when using the language, and feel more encouraged to try to make use of their restricted L2 resources, thus developing their strategic communication. They might not only feel more prepared to cope with the problems arising in communication, but this CS usage might also help them in their interlanguage transition to the use of more complex linguistic structures. The higher levels may also benefit from this instruction, in that they can make more efficient use of their available resources by strengthening the strategies already used, and learn other ways of how to face more complex problems encountered in communication. In addition, learners at all levels may benefit particularly from the interactional type of CSs, in that through a collaborative strategic communication both speakers can help each other to get their message across, thus contributing to each other’s learning. Furthermore, from the teachers’ point of view, I think that by training students in the use of CSs tutors may be more likely to help them to develop fluency in the target language as well as make them more aware of their own L2 performance, thus leading them to monitoring their own learning.

A final implication can be drawn in relation to CSs and their possible aid to L2 learning. This issue was also observed in the present research, albeit indirectly, as the
learners’ strategic use of the language demonstrated their focus on certain aspects of L2 communication. The thorough qualitative examination of the data seemed to indicate that these learners’ CS usage reflected their learning stages which, as has also been found by research in L2 development (Myles, 2005; Dussias, 2003), tends to progress from the use of primarily lexical items, less complex, and reduced – less coherent – structures, to more complex structures. Although this distinction was not directly observed and measured, it supports existing evidence relating to L2 development and, therefore, suggests possible benefits of CS usage in L2 learning processes. For this purpose, longitudinal studies may be more beneficial in order to investigate CS usage in time, according to different as well as more marked proficiency levels.

1.10. Organization of the Study

The thesis is organized into five chapters. The first two chapters provide the theoretical and empirical context which served as basis for the present work. This is followed by the three chapters which describe the study: methodology, data analysis, and finally discussion and conclusion.

Chapter 2 describes in more detail the theoretical background and research carried out in the field by defining main concepts and explaining the theoretical perspectives underlying CSs. Some methodological issues for the identification of CSs are also introduced.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology utilized in order to collect the spoken data, identify the CSs and analyse their use in two proficiency levels: lower and higher levels. Information regarding the participants is also presented. The chapter goes on to describe the steps followed in the collection and elicitation of data as well as the instruments used. Finally, the data analysis is explained, covering the steps taken for the transcription, analysis and coding of the data. It also presents the adapted analytical framework used for the identification of the CSs. This modified version was based on the taxonomy proposed by Dörnyei and Scott (1995). This chapter serves as an introduction for the subsequent analysis and
discussion of results, as it defines and illustrates each of the mechanisms to be examined later. The conventions used in the transcription of the data are also presented.

Chapter 4 turns to the analysis of data by first presenting an overview of the results in order to address the first general research objective: the number and type of CSs. It then focuses on the examination of the variable, the proficiency level, aiming to determine the effects of this variable on the learners’ use of CSs. The results obtained are examined from most general to most detailed levels of analysis, considering each main CS category and subcategories within the analytical framework of the study.

The thesis concludes with chapter 5, which discusses the results and summarizes the findings in this study. And lastly, some suggestions for future research are proposed.
CHAPTER 2:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Chapter Two

Review of Literature

2.1. Introduction

The present chapter provides an introduction to what constitutes the main issue of this study, that is, communication strategies (CSs). It addresses the factors which form the main research objective: the CSs employed by Persian L2 learners of English in interactions. The following account will present an overview of CSs, in terms of the origins of the concept, definitions, underlying theoretical frameworks and typologies. In addition, some evidence on the identification methods as well as the variable under examination will be provided.

2.2. Communication Strategies: Origins

The term communication strategies originated from the study of interlanguage (IL). One of the first works which discussed second language learning from a psycholinguistic perspective was that of Selinker (1972) entitled ‘Interlanguage’. In his work, he defined IL as ‘…a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner’s attempted production of a target language norm’ (p. 214). Within the assumption that second language learning should be concerned with the analysis of ‘surface structures of IL sentences... [so as to be able] to study the psycholinguistic processes...underly[ing] this IL behaviour’ (p. 214), he suggests the existence of five central processes in second language learning; one of them being ‘strategies of second language communication’.

The concept of CS has been widely studied since then within the area of ‘process-oriented IL research’ (Færch & Kasper, 1983). The first studies which focused only on IL speech production, and which were gathered in the work of Færch and Kasper in 1983, aimed at proposing the first definitions and typologies of CSs. From the 1970’s on, IL studies were
concerned with examining different types of speakers’ speech in relation to the different learning stages, and the processes involved in that learning, one of them being the communication process (Færch & Kasper, 1983). Research carried out in the foreign language (FL) classroom also helped to complement studies on CSs, an aspect which was enhanced by the turn to more communicative teaching methodologies in the 1980’s. This interest in CSs was reflected in the incorporation of these mechanisms in the theoretical framework for ‘communicative competence’ presented by Canale and Swain (1980), for which they proposed ‘strategic competence’, as an additional category to the existing ones (grammatical and sociolinguistic competence) (Kaivanpanah & Yamouty, 2009).

At the end of 1990’s, Kasper and Kellerman (1997) published a second edited volume on these strategies covering the latest studies. In this work, they did not only present the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic views on these strategies, but widened the scope by incorporating studies from other areas, such as bilingualism and language pathology. Since then, there has been a continuous interest in the study of these mechanisms. Factors related to their use have also been examined, for example, the influence of different background languages as well the learners’ L2, the tasks to be applied for elicitation purposes, the learning context, and the type of dyads, amongst others. In order to have a broader view of how the concept of CSs originated the component of strategic competence will be now analysed with the purpose of determining how CSs fit within this broader construct of L2 language use.

2.3. Strategic Competence

One of the first attempts to include communication strategies within a broader framework was made by Canale and Swain (1980), who proposed an outline of a theory of communicative competence, complemented first by some criteria for a communicative approach to second language teaching, in which they incorporated a new component,
‘strategic competence’. Their interest laid in the fact those different features of L2 learners’ oral production, such as ‘how to deal with false starts, hesitation [...] how to avoid grammatical forms that have been not mastered fully...’ (p. 25) had not been considered until then within the competencies a learner was expected to have. Bearing this in mind, these authors proposed a third component, to the already existing types of competencies (grammatical and sociolinguistic), which as they themselves put it: ‘is made up of verbal and non-verbal communication that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence’ (p. 30).

These scholars also suggested that this strategic competence might be more useful at early stages of L2 learning, and that the use of these CSs might be dependent on learners’ age and their L2 proficiency, factors which would be also examined in later CS research. However, as Canale and Swain did not develop this new element further, restricting its definition to this compensatory role – and there was no empirical evidence supporting its rationale – their construct was criticised by other researchers, who instead challenged it and made their own proposals.

One of the researchers who attempted to develop the previous proposal further, through her own empirical evidence, was Paribakht (1985), who as Yule and Tarone (1990) would do later, sought to extend the relation between this new competence and the linguistic competencies. Her other main objective was to see whether the learners’ L2 proficiency affected their use of CSs – a relationship which would successfully be confirmed through her findings. She also found that all subjects seem to possess this strategic ability, but that this competence and their L2 proficiency level appear to be independent. That is to say, the L2 knowledge that these learners have would help them in their selection of a specific CS, for example more related to their L1 or L2, depending on their interlanguage stage, but they would all share this strategic competence: ‘strategic competence and linguistic competence
are two different dimensions of language competence’ (p. 142). She concluded that strategic competence ‘has a different status from the other competencies’, in that ‘it can be transferred to L2 learning and communicative situations without causing interference’, and that it depends on other ‘competencies and knowledge areas’ (p. 142). She also suggested the inclusion of all language-related strategies (learning and communication strategies), and proposed her own definition of strategic competence as ‘the learners’ ability to try out different means for solving any language-related problems whether in learning or in communication’; ‘learning strategies used to expand the speaker’s competence, and CSs used to exploit it’ (p. 142). This view, therefore, places CSs in a wider perspective of problem-solving capacity, whilst still maintaining a particular role for CSs as opposed to learning strategies. What is particularly relevant to the present study is that Paribakht showed that all speakers possess this strategic ability, which seems to increase as our language experience increases, and as such can be transferred to other languages in the case of L2 learners. The way in which learners utilize this competence, in terms of the kinds of strategies they apply when communicating, can thus be different depending on their proficiency level, and therefore: ‘learner behaviour in terms of strategy use seems to be transitional and dynamic’, as Paribakht herself concluded (1985, p. 141).

Other researchers who also accepted that this type of competence referred to both mother tongue and target languages was Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991), who noted that: ‘communicative breakdowns occur and must be overcome in both languages but it is of more importance for foreign language learners’ (p. 17). They recognized the importance of considering such competence, especially, in activities related to teaching and testing, such as oral language exams, where some very proficient students, regarding aspects such as grammar and vocabulary, ‘get stuck and are unable to carry out their communicative intent’, and others ‘can communicate successfully with only one hundred words, relying almost
entirely on their strategic competence’ (p. 17). Their study, which focused only on the benefits of teaching CSs, advocates the development of strategic competence within the foreign language classroom, on the grounds that it is not dependent on other factors of the learners’ proficiency, but that it can be trained separately, since as they mention it is a competence that ‘can be activated’ when learners need to communicate something that goes beyond their linguistic knowledge. This work; therefore, supports the idea presented by the researchers mentioned above, regarding the usefulness of these CSs, in that they help learners to communicate their intended message regardless of their proficiency level in other language areas. Dörnyei and Thurrell’s perspective, on the importance of instructing foreign language learners on the use of these CSs to enhance their communicative performance, shows how valuable these strategies can be. However, as this view will not be of particular interest in the present study, it will not be further developed.

Another attempt to elaborate on the concept of strategic competence was made by Bachman and Palmer (1996), who redefined a previous proposal (Bachman, 1990) by stating that, we conceive strategic competence as a set of metacognitive components, or strategies, which can be thought of as higher order executive processes that provide a cognitive management function in language use, as well as in other cognitive activities (p. 70).

By metacognitive strategies, Bachman and Palmer (1996) referred to ‘those processes that enable language users to engage in goal setting, assessment and planning’ (p. 79), adding that the ability to use the language involves strategic competence and language knowledge (organizational and pragmatic). Although these authors developed this concept more deeply within the area of language testing, the construct proposed does cover the fact that language users in general utilize this type of competence, and that it refers in a broader sense not only to all underlying processes we are engaged in when performing any cognitive activity, but more specifically to being able to think about our own performance in any language-related...
event. The essential concepts of this proposal are therefore in line with Paribakht’s suggestions mentioned above.

A more developed view of this type of competence was proposed by Skehan (1998). He provides a detailed analysis of this component – as proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and then further developed by Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996) – criticizing their positions. He strongly pinpoints the weakness in Canale and Swain’s proposal, by saying that their framework is not ‘comprehensive’ and ‘rather limited, only emphasizing the compensatory role of strategies’ (p. 159) – a critique also made by Cohen (1998) and Yule and Tarone (1990). Regarding Bachman’s approach, Skehan highlights the fact that it presents significant advances, more detailed changes in relation to the broader notion of communicative competence as well as its components. Additionally, he underlines the change made relating to the role of strategic competence, which has now become ‘central to all communication’ (p. 161), which means that it connects the learner’s (and the mother tongue user’s) intended message and the other existing competencies, as well as their previous knowledge and the situational context. The most important aspect, as Skehan mentions, is that ‘Bachman is redefining the relationship between competence and performance’ (p. 161). However, his criticism of this second view has to do with the lack of empirical evidence to account for the ‘mechanisms and processes which can enable such a model to move beyond “checklist” status’ (p. 164). Thus, based on such a detailed exploration and analysis of these two approaches, Skehan reflects on the different processes which are fundamental to strategic competence, analysing all the factors which influence each stage within language use, such as planning and execution. He examines this by relating these processes to task-based research and testing, which results in a deep analysis of the current aspects considered in testing, and how to re-evaluate the performance testing methods. Within this frame of analysis, Skehan suggests a wider construct for this competence, that of ‘ability for use’, which as he explains
‘is seen to mediate between underlying competences and actual performance’. He proposes that, dual-coding models of abilities, attention-linked tensions between performance goals such as fluency, accuracy, and complexity, and even an understanding of a redefined competence-performance relationship would be best handled within this construct (p. 168).

Although this construct seems to address all the different processes involved in communication, and as such Skehan’s analysis appears to be useful in order to have a broader view of this competence, it is specifically proposed within a model of performance testing, an issue that goes beyond the scope of this study.

Finally, Cohen (1998) is also interested in analysing this concept, by exploring the different factors involved in learning and using an L2. Like other researchers mentioned above, he points out that, while Canale and Swain (1980) restricted this component to a compensatory role, Bachman and Palmer (1996) broadened it to consider metacognitive processes in the realization of cognitive activities, such as communicating in a second language. Cohen adds that this component will therefore include not only metacognitive strategies ‘for determining the language needed to perform the task’, but also cognitive ‘for selecting appropriate language structures’, strategies for planning ‘how to accomplish the task’ and ‘post-task assessment strategies’ (p. 14).

On the basis of the above discussion, it is possible to distinguish some of the main processes underlying this kind of competence, and which will be considered for the present study. The views which will be given more relevance include aspects proposed by Bachman and Palmer (1996), in that this component should involve those metacognitive abilities which enable L2 learners to carry out cognitive tasks, such as the elicitation activities used in this study.

Another feature of strategic competence which will also be taken into account concerns what was proposed by Paribakht (1985), Yule and Tarone (1990) and Dörnyei
(1991). This aspect points to this competence as being possessed by all learners, irrespective of their proficiency level, and which they are able to use in language-related areas in order to cope with language-related problems in communication. The learners’ subsequent CS use therefore will tend to vary according to that level. As the wider concept which comprises these mechanisms, as well as the main processes underlying their usage, has been explained, what follows addresses some of the main definitions and perspectives which have been specifically proposed for CSs.

2.4. Communication Strategies Defined

Various definitions of CSs are found in the literature. Most of them have focused on the concepts of ‘problem-orientatedness’ and ‘consciousness’, and have followed a linguistic or a psychological approach.

One of the first pioneer studies which attempted to provide a definition for these strategies was that of Váradi (1973). He defined CSs as ‘a conscious attempt to communicate the learner’s thought when the interlanguage structures are inadequate to convey that thought’ (quoted in Tarone, 1977, p. 195). Following that, in 1977, Tarone concluded, from Váradi’s conceptualization of CSs, that ‘conscious communication strategies are used by an individual to overcome the crisis which occurs when language structures are inadequate to convey the individual’s thought’ (p. 195). The aspect of ‘consciousness’ is thus complemented by that of ‘problematicity’ being proposed in the second definition; both factors would be central in later definitions.

In 1976, Tarone, Cohen and Dumas proposed their own definition and analytical framework for these strategies. They based their work on studies of error analysis and used a former definition applied to the term ‘production strategy’ (Tarone, Fraunfelder & Selinker, 1976) to the concept of CS, defining the term as ‘a systematic attempt by the learner to express (or decode) meaning in the target language in situations where the appropriate
3.2. Resource deficit-related strategies

repeat her question.
پایان نامه برای دریافت درجه کارشناسی ارشد در رشته آموزش زبان انگلیسی

عنوان:
مطالعه رابطه بین سطح مهارت و انتخاب راهبردهای ارتباطی میان زبان آموزان ایرانی

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