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A Training to Enhance Oral Communication Strategies for Spanish Leaners of English

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ABSTRACT

This experimental study investigates the use of oral communication strategies (CSs) by Spanish learners of English and the effect of the conducted oral CSs training on the subjects' use of the CSs. This study is adding value to the fields of teaching and communication by including a training on the use of communication strategies instead of observation. It also counts with data collected from a total of 116 participants and 464 protocols including 2 high and 2 low proficient groups. Our subjects took part in a training on CSs before setting a pre and post-test (interview and storytelling). To compare the results of the use of CSs before and after the training for each of the levels and also manage a cross-sectional comparison between the groups, the researchers used the Canonical Biplot free program. The results of this empirical study proved the effectiveness of the CSs training. It also confirmed that the high proficient group benefited more from the training when compared to the low proficient students.

Key words: English Language Teaching, Proficiency Level, Communication Strategies, Training

INTRODUCTION

Language teaching has recently become challenging to both teachers and learners since it has become more demanding in relation to the different variables that interfere in the learning process. Continuous research has been done in the field of interlanguage (IL) and second language acquisition (SLA), with a special focus on the learner's behavior and teaching methodologies. As a result, there has been a great shift in the curriculum design and the interest of the specialists who have become more interested in the learning process rather than the learning as a product. Researchers are intensively working on how to orient their investigations towards classroom implementation for better linking with the teaching of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).

Therefore, analyses of the learners' interlanguage and its communicative effect on the interlocutor have become a widely investigated phenomenon. Recent trends of research have dealt mainly with assessing the communicative potential of the learner's language by means of emphasizing the learner's role, his/her communicative needs in the foreign language (FL) and the effect that his/her IL exerts on the interlocutors. Special interest was given to the problem-solving process with the aim of exploiting the intermediary ways that the learners use to overcome their communicative problems and to convey their message. A vital aim of this area of research is a better understanding of the interplay between the factors involved in SL/FL communicative competence to improve the act of teaching/learning. This field of research has provided different theoretical and empirical studies with insightful implications and findings that help clarify the controversy of communication in general, but which also highlight the complexity of the communicative skills in both written and spoken forms.

The fundamental aim of this study is to investigate the teachability of oral communication strategies and to shift the focus from the product to investigating the process and the possible ways of improving its particular steps to get better results in oral performance. By detecting the problems, the students come across during their spoken tasks; by having a good understanding of their cognitive as well as pedagogical underpinnings; and by providing the adequate strategies to overcome these problems, teachers will be able to predict and understand their learners' problematic instances. This will give them the ability to provide better conditions and instructions for successful oral communication, as well as shed light on the neglected aspects which separate speech from writing. It is obvious that many people learn to translate their spoken dialect into standard written English or vice versa, disregarding the fact that both spoken and written forms are linked to the social background, second language (L2) proficiency, age, race, gender, personality, culture, and motivation of the writer, speaker and audience; and ignoring the possibility to switch between formal and informal communication or to use different strategies depending on whom or what topic they are addressing.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining and Classifying Communication Strategies

In second language acquisition, defining communication strategies (CSs) is similar to defining the strategic use of IL system for communication. The FL learner resorts to CSs only when he finds difficulties in attaining a specific communicative goal through his IL system. Tarone, Cohen and Dumas, following the psycholinguistic approach to defining CSs, referred to this phenomenon as production strategies that do not include IL comprehension, and defined it as a "… systematic attempt by the learner to express meaning in the target language, in situations where the appropriate target language rules have not been formed" (1983, p. 5). Second language communication strategies have been regarded by CSs researchers as the procedures used because of IL deficiencies (Bialystok, 1990; Connor, 2002; Dörnyei and Scott, 1997; Lewis, 2011; Nakatani 2010; Tarone, 1977). CSs were mostly described as a non-native behavior or incorrect linguistic performance to overcome the obstacles or crises that occur either when their communicative ends outrun their communicative means (Corder, 1983; Faerch and Kasper, 1983; Lewis, 2011; Paribakht, 1985), or when they have difficulties in verbalizing a mental plan as a result of a linguistic deficiency (Ataollah, 2010; Faerch and Kasper, 1984; Mariani, 2007; Tarone, 1981; Váradi, 1973). Following the same stream, Dörnyei and Scott defined CSs as "the mismatch between L2 speakers' linguistic resources and communicative intentions (which) leads to a number of systematic language phenomenon whose main function is to handle difficulties or breakdowns in communication" (1997, p. 174). A wider definition which includes all types of CSs, and the one that will be adopted throughout this paper, was suggested by the interactionalists Tarone, Cohen, and Dumas, who defined CSs as both the production and the comprehension of the TL. They state that "Communication strategies… a systematic attempt by the learner to express or decode meaning in the target language, in situations where the appropriate systematic target language rules have not been formed" (1983, p.5).

However, there is still controversy surrounding the definition or identification of CSs as opposed to certain types of strategies like learning and production strategies. From this background of different definitions and approaches we can conclude that no conclusive definition of this term can be provided due to the various terminologies.

Communication Strategies vs. Language Learning Strategies

One of the principle confusions in the field of SLA research is the distinction between CSs and language learning strategies (LLSs). Some authors regard them as synonymous as a result of the identical data used in investigating both terms (utterances of IL speakers). The degree of difficulty to distinguish those two interrelated terms is reflected in Corder's explanation:

> This is particularly the case with features of an utterance which bears a resemblance to features of the speaker's mother tongue. They may be regular characteristics of his language at the time of study, in which case they could be supposed to result from the Interlanguage grammar which he has created himself, and are therefore the product of a strategy of learning (1983, p.19).

On one hand, CSs are considered as the product of a strategy of learning, and one might argue that CSs may hurdle acquisition and help the learner develop skills to compensate for his/her linguistic deficiencies (Ellis, 2000). Others like Tarone propose a contrasting point of view and conclude that "Learning may result from the use of a communication strategy …" (1980, p.420).

On the other hand, LLSs that were first described and defined in the 1970's in studies on good learners by (Rubin, 1987; Wong-Fillmore, 1979). These studies presented LLSs as an act of processing input to develop linguistic knowledge, and as techniques or devices that learners may use to acquire language (Rubin, 1987). Hardly ever contrasted with communication strategies, learning strategies were introduced to the field of language learning and teaching as the conscious, intentional individual behaviors or skills that distinguish learners and which can be learnt and improved since as Weinstein, Husman and Dierking explained "learning strategies include any thoughts, behaviors, beliefs or emotions that facilitate the acquisition, understanding or later transfer of new knowledge and skills" (2000, p.727).

Other researchers (Tarone, 1977; Váradi, 1973) looked upon CSs from a different perspective, defining them as conscious attempts to convey the learner's ideas when his interlanguage fails to do so. This explains that the only way to distinguish CSs from LLSs is to describe them in terms of function. That is, language learning strategies are those used to achieve learning, and communication strategies are the ones that aim at avoiding communicative breakdowns (Tarone, 1984). Still, the distinction between the two terms is not clear; the difference cannot be explained adequately; and there is little consensus in the literature concerning the relationship between CSs and LLSs. As Littlewood holds "(One issue) about which we have no precise knowledge is the nature of the relationship between CSs and learning" (1984, p.40) because of the complexity and the ambiguity of the learning process.

From all these competing definitions we can conclude that the identification of CSs, as opposed to LLSs, may be speculative since no empirical investigation has proved to get to the clear-cut criteria that define CSs with respect to LLSs.

Teaching Communication Strategies

Savignon (1983) reported on a pioneer language teaching experiment involving a communicative approach, which, for the first time, included student training in what she called coping strategies. Since then, much research has been conducted to identify and classify CSs yet less attention has been paid to the possibility of exploiting CSs inside the classroom.

The teachability of CSs has always been a controversial subject in the literature. Viewpoints differ greatly due to pros that defend the teaching of CSs, and cons that reject

it. Arguments against the teaching of CSs are based on the notion that strategic competence develops in the speaker's L1 and is freely transferable to target language use (Bongaerts, Kellerman and Bentlage, 1987; Poulisse, 1993, 1990). This means that learners of any language have an already established and developed CSs skills originating from their L1 and independent form their SL/FL proficiency (Ataollah, 2010; Kellerman and Bialystok, 1997; Lewis, 2011). In this case, researchers like Kellerman were clear about the teachability of CSs since he explained that "there is no justification for providing training in compensatory strategies in the classroom … teach the learners more language and let the strategies look after themselves" (1991, p .158). Among these researchers we can also mention Bialystok (1990) who also defended the same point by claiming that "the more language the learner knows, the more possibilities exist for the system to be flexible and to adjust itself to meet the demands of the learner. What one must teach students of a language is not the strategy, but language" (Bialystok, 1990, p.147).

Notwithstanding, others (Brooks, 1992; Chen, 1990; Faerch and kasper, 1983, 1986; Haastrup and Philipson, 1983; Lewis, 2011; Paribakht, 1986; Rost and Ross, 1991; Tarone and Yule, 1989; Willems, 1987) supported the teachability of CSs although there was very little research done on CSs training as Bialystok stated, "there is little empirical research investigating the pedagogy of CSs, so descriptions and evaluations of any procedure are somewhat speculative" (1990, p.149). Following this stream of believing in the teachability of CSs Nation explained that they should be taught "to allow the learner to operate with a small vocabulary, and permit speech to remain fluent" (Nation, 1990, p. 97).

Moving a step further concerning the teachability of CSs, Kellerman (1998) defined CSs as the raising of the learners' awareness of their already existing CSs This concept was elaborated by Faerch and Kasper who provoked a theoretical shift in defining the act of teaching:

> If by teaching we also mean making learners conscious about aspects of their (already existing) behavior, it is obvious that we should teach them about strategies, in particular, how to use communication strategies most appropriately (1980, p.98).

Consequently, we can conclude that teaching CSs can be defined as any of the acts of teaching new strategies or raising the learners' consciousness about the existing ones or both. Based on this idea we believe in the effectiveness of the teaching of communication strategies and the training of F/SL learners on the successful use of these strategies (Benali, 2011, 2012, 2015 and Benali Taouis & Lopez Pérez, 2018).

METHOD

This study aims at examining the effectiveness of teaching oral communication strategies. It has the very specific objective of studying the teachability of CSs and its effect on the use of these strategies by Spanish learners of English (high-school students). The subjects' level of proficiency was measured through the paper and pen version of the *Oxford Quick Placement Test* (2004). This test served to screen the participants and form homogenous groups of 2 different levels (high and low proficient). Before starting the actual investigation there was a piloting study that was conducted with other subjects to test the reliability of the tasks and research tools. The piloting test subjects were 10 high proficient and a similar number of low proficient students. The followed process was to complete the research tasks and to answer a questionnaire immediately after. In the questionnaire the students had to reply to specific questions about the clarity of the instructions of each of the tasks and the level of difficulty of the suggested topics.

The research objectives focused on investigating the results of the CSs training on the subjects' fluency and on the use of CSs in oral contexts. It also aimed at studying the effect of the level of proficiency on the types and frequency distribution of CSs used by the subjects in oral communication.

As the aforementioned research objectives suggest, the research hypotheses are basically based on the relation between the training, the use of Oral CSs and the proficiency level of the participants. Eventually, we conducted this experiment to confirm that Spanish EFL low proficient students will use less oral CSs than the high proficient ones as our first hypothesis. Another expectation that we also had was that the Spanish low proficient EFL students will use help seeking strategies more than the high proficient EFL ones. Finally, as a matter of fact, we also hypothesized that the strategy training will improve the use of oral CSs of both high and low proficient learners.

This research was conducted in three major phases. The pre, during and post-training. During the first part, data was collected to be compared with the post-training following the same procedure and types of tasks. Interview and storytelling tasks were two oral activities used by the researchers to collect the data of this study.

To be able to judge the effect of the training on the use of communication strategies by the subjects of the experimental groups, the instruments used in both parts were similar in form and requirements. These instruments consisted of two oral tasks: Storytelling and interview. As far as the strategy training is concerned, two different types of instruments were used, and it was divided into two phases. First, we started with the training phase (authentic listening related to each of the target strategies, as well as the practice phase of each oral strategy). Then we ended with the testing of these strategies to measure the effect of the training on the fluency and the use of CSs by the experimental groups as opposed to the control ones. All the parts of the research are interrelated, and the results of the investigation are the accumulation of each and every stage.

The instruments mentioned above were designed following Seliger and Shohamy's criteria of good research in which they emphasized the notion of conformability. This term was defined in their work as the ability of the researcher to confirm the findings by means of different sources and was also considered as "an aspect of validation in research that is closely related to representativeness and retrievability" (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p.105).

Therefore, the training stage of the actual investigation was divided into 8 sessions, the first 6 of which were dedicated to explicit strategy instruction after a warm-up listening activity meant to elicit data and to make the subjects deduce the CSs used in the listening. The aim of the whole training was to help the learners become aware of their own learning processes, and to develop their metacognitive skills. This was done by introducing specific oral/written communication strategies that might enhance skills for managing interaction actively during oral or written spontaneous communication. In addition to the first part of the training, there was another equally important part to which we dedicated 2 complete sessions. In this second part, the subjects of the two experimental groups who participated in the strategy training (the 6 sessions mentioned previously and detailed bellow) were all given the opportunity to consolidate what they had learnt and to put together all the CSs that they have been practicing separately during the first part of the training. That is, subjects of the high and low proficiency groups were made to practice during two sessions with oral communicative tasks in which they were required to use all the CSs they had learnt during the training. The whole strategy training experiment was structured as follows:

- 1st session: modified output strategies (paraphrasing: General physical properties, specific features and functional description).
- 2nd session: modified output strategies (restructuring: That is, to gain time to think of synonyms or a specific description, language users can start again from the beginning to reconstruct their sentences, Faerch and Kasper, 1983).
- 3rd Session: energy and time saving strategies (Chunks: institutionalization, fixedness and non-compositionality).
- 4th session: help seeking strategies (appeal for authority and asking for repetition) 5th session: time-gaining strategies (gap-fillers: words or gambits to fill pauses and to gain time to think)
- 6th session: maintenance strategies (providing active response and shadowing)
- 7th and 8th sessions: practice of all the previous CSs (paraphrasing, restructuring, chunks, appeal for authority, asking for repetition, gap-fillers, providing active response and shadowing).

The teaching method adopted for this training was an inductive one. The subjects were provided with a recording and its transcription at the beginning of each lesson. The listening worked as a warm-up activity which the trainees had to analyze, with the help of the researchers, in order to work out the CSs used by the speaker. After the warm-up activity students were made to write down the new CS and were asked to give oral examples using the introduced CS. As a follow up activity, the subjects were given an oral task to be fulfilled. The tasks of the pre and posttests (interview and storytelling pre and post tasks) were corded then the number and types of communication strategies used by each subject in each of the tasks were manually calculated before the data was entered in the Canonical Biplot program to be compared and analyzed.

Data Collection

Being an experimental quantitative cross-sectional study entails that the data was collected from subjects with different levels of proficiency and that it has two types of groups: the experimental group, who participated in the training, and the control group, who only took part in the pre and the post tests. The experimental groups were formed by 58 students (30 low-proficient and 28 of high-proficient subjects). The control groups were also a total of 58 students divided similarly as in the experimental group (the difference in numbers between the high and the low proficient groups was due to a loss of subjects who missed one of the training sessions). As previously mentioned, they all took the *Oxford Quick Placement Test* before being assigned a group.

The variables that were considered in the data analysis are the strategy training as the independent variable while the use of CSs together was the dependent one. Before the subjects started performing the tasks, they were given clear rubrics on how to proceed in each task to guarantee error free performance. It was also necessary to ensure comparable performance conditions for all the subjects. Therefore, students were informed that they were not allowed to use dictionaries, notebooks, laptops, mobile phones or any other resources in order to allow a fair comparison. In addition, research conditions were the same for everyone. The tests were administered in the same setting (the classroom) and with the same teacher.

In this research, the frequency of CSs was manually calculated by counting the number and the type of CSs used by each subject per task. However, all the other analyses were run using the free Biplot program available on the page of the statistics department of Universidad de Salamanca. This method by (Galindo, 1986; Gower and Hand, 1996) has recently become one of the most popular techniques for analyzing multivariate data. Biplot methods are techniques for the simultaneous representation of the (n) rows and (p) columns of a data matrix (X). This data is presented in reduced dimensions, where the rows represent individuals, objects or samples and the columns the variables measured on them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the Oral Production in the Interview Task in the Pre and Post-tests

The analyzed data includes 232 protocols for the interview task in both pre and post-tests (60 of each low proficient group and 56 of each high proficient group). The produced CSs were classified following the taxonomy specifically developed for the actual study including productive communication strategies divided into 8 CSs: paraphrasing (P), restructuring (R), appeal for authority (AA), asking for repetition (AR), gap-fillers (GF), providing active response (PAR), shadowing (S), and chunks (C). As previously explained, the data was described numerically by counting the total percentage of use of CSs by every individual subject to get the total amount of the CSs employed by each group in every category. The data was then statistically analyzed by using the Canonical Biplot that allows the discrimination

and comparison between groups and specifies the variables responsible for those differences by first applying a One-Way ANOVA-test shown in table 1 bellow.

The figures in the table above represent the results of the One-Way ANOVA-test that demonstrates the differences in the number of CSs used in the interview task in the pre and post-tests. It is clearly shown that there are significant differences in the use of most CSs (appeal for authority, asking for repetition, gap-fillers, shadowing and providing active response) between the pre and the post-test employed in a $p<0.05$ level. That is, in the pre-test the four groups showed no significant use of the previously mentioned CSs; whereas in the post-test these variables resulted significant. At this stage, if we use only the One-Way ANOVA-test the non-significant variables should be neglected and consequently could not be analyzed. Moreover, the ones that resulted significant in both pre and post-tests may be regarded as strategies that did not benefit from the training (which is not true). Thus, the Canonical Biplot Analysis based on Wilks' Lambda solves this problem by comparing all the groups in all the variables and establishing a global p value that represents the significance of all the groups in all the variables. In this way even the variables that resulted non-significant in the One-Way ANOVA-test can be represented in the Canonical Biplot plan.

Table 1. The One-Way ANOVA-test results of the interview task

Variable	Total	Explained	Residual	F	Sign.
CPI	116	9.356	105.644	3.306	0.02285
RPI	116	43.727	71.273	22.904	0
PPI	116	10.52	104.48	3.759	0.0129
AAPI	116	6.95	108.05	2.401	0.07151
ARPI	116	4.405	110.595	1.487	0.22193
GFPI	116	6.203	108.797	2.128	0.10061
SPI	116	5.747	109.253	1.964	0.12348
PARPI	116	3.303	111.697	1.104	0.35069
CPOI	116	104.564	10.436	374.076	0
RPOI	116	100.497	14.503	258.698	0
PPOI	116	100.137	14.863	251.521	0
AAPOI	116	102.311	12.689	301.017	0
ARPOI	116	98.17	16.83	217.766	0
GFPOI	116	100.094	14.906	250.688	0
SPOI	116	106.209	8.791	451.047	0
PARPOI	116	99.176	15.824	233.989	0

PI: pre-test interview.
POI: post-test interview.
P: paraphrasing.
R: restructuring.
S: shadowing.
AA: appeal for authority.
AR: asking for repetition.
GF: gap-fillers.
PAR: providing active response.
C: chunks.
F: f-Snedecor.
Sign: Significance $P<0.05$

Comparing the Variables between Groups

The Canonical Biplot Analysis applied to the data collected from the interview task in the pre and post-tests also offers a global contrast of the four groups in all the variables based on Wilks' Lambda which is the equivalent of a t-test represented in a general form. The results are reflected in table 2 below that shows a very high level of interpretation of the data gathered from the interview task in the pre and post-tests.

As highlighted in the table above both axes 1 and 2 show an elevated degree of representation (91.613 and 99.442) with a global contrast based on Wilks' Lambda with a p of 1.7853e-102 in a level of $p<0.05$. In other words, this global t-test assures that all the groups and variables (even the ones that resulted non-significant in the One-Way ANOVA-test shown in table 1) are highly interpretable and, therefore, the projection of those variables and groups in the plan designed by the Canonical Biplot Analysis projects and reflects all the data compiled in the pre and post-tests of the interview task.

All the results represented and discussed in the One-Way ANOVA-test, including the ones with a low level of significance that appeared especially in the pre-test results, are represented in the plan generated by the Canonical Biplot Analysis. This availed the analysis of all the variables used in the taxonomy. In the Canonical Biplot plan shown below we can see the differences between groups in every and each variable. This plan, as previously explained, offers the same analysis as a t-test an ANOVA and a MANOVA-test at the same time giving the researchers the possibility of comparing and contrasting the points of interest the research.

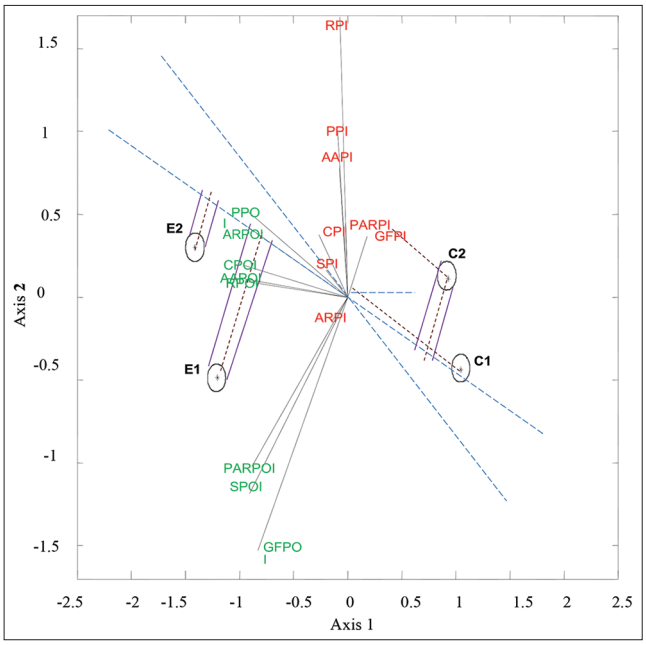
The graphic above shows the use of oral CSs in the oral interview in both pre and post-tests of the low and the high experimental and control groups (E1, E2, C1 and C2). The possibility of having a general representation of all the CSs used by the four groups in all the tasks both in pre and post-tests is an advantage of the Canonical Biplot that allows to have a general overview on the results and to make general conclusions comparing the four groups in the use of each category of CSs and contrasting the results of the frequency of employing every specific strategy in the pre and post-tests.

As reflected in the plan above the two low proficient groups (Experimental 1: E1 and Control 1: C1) demonstrate a very low level of CSs production. The four groups show a slight difference in use of CSs in which the low proficient group (E1 and C1) used less CSs than the high proficient one (Experimental 2: E2 and Control 2: C2). This is shown in the projection of the centers of the circles of C2 results farther from the center of the axes than that of C1 as seen on the projection of the two groups on *gap-fillers* and *providing active response* in the pre-test. The projection of the centers of the circles of E2 results farther from the center of the axes than that of E1 on *asking for repetition* and *paraphrasing* in the post-test. These differences in the frequency distribution of the CSs used by the high and the low proficient groups confirm the first hypothesis of this study expecting the low proficient students to use less CSs than the high proficient ones. Moreover, it is also reflected in the plan that the number of CSs increases with the level of proficiency. Another

Table 2. Global contrast based on Wilks' Lambda

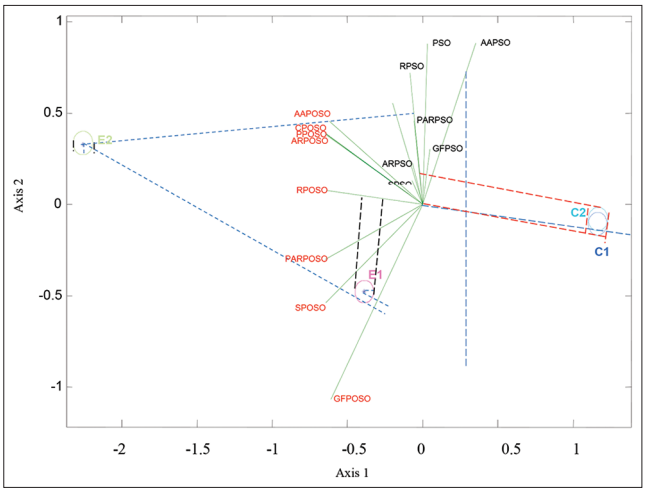
Dimension	Eigenv.	% Expl.	Cumm.	TSS	ESS	F	p-valve
1	7.469	91.613	91.613	56.79	55.79	2082.827	0
2	2.183	7.828	99.442	5.767	4.767	177.979	0
3	0.583	0.558	100	1.34	0.34	12.689	0

p-value: 1.7853e-102



Plan 1. The use of oral CSs in the oral interview in both pre and post-tests of the low and the high experimental and control groups

PI: pre-test interview. POI: post-test interview. P: paraphrasing. R: restructuring. S: shadowing. AA: appeal for authority. AR: asking for repetition. GF: gap-fillers. PAR: providing active response. C: chunks. E1: low proficient experimental group. E2: high proficient experimental group. C1: low proficient control group. C2: high proficient control group



Plan 2. Comparing the variable among groups.

PSO: pre-test storytelling oral task. PSOI: post-test storytelling oral task. P: paraphrasing. R: restructuring. S: shadowing. AA: appeal for authority. AR: asking for repetition. GF: gap-fillers. PAR: providing active response. C: chunks. E1: low proficient experimental group. E2: high proficient experimental group. C1: low proficient control group. C2: high proficient control group.

important remark is the difference between the types of oral CSs employed by the high and low proficient groups: the low proficient groups (E1 and C1) use more help seeking strategies than the high-proficient groups (E2 and C2), which goes hand in hand with the second hypothesis of the current investigation suggesting that the Spanish low proficient EFL students will use help seeking strategies more than the high proficient ones.

Generally, there is an over-reliance on some strategies (paraphrasing, restructuring and appeal for authority) in the pre-tests and a great development of the use of all the strategies by the experimental groups in the post-tests (gap- fillers, paraphrasing and shadowing that appear as the longest lines in the post- test plan) since we can see that the variables of the pre-test form a continuous line (GFPI and GFPOI) or a very open angle between 60º and 160º (PARPI, PAROI; SPI and SPOI). Moreover, the four groups show a relatively very low level of use of the modified output strategies (restructuring and paraphrasing) and *energy* and *time saving strategies* (chunks) when compared to their production in the post-test.

The results of this test go hand in hand with the third hypothesis which assumes that the strategy training will improve the use of oral CSs of both high and low proficient learners. To form a general idea about the oral CSs that benefited most from the strategy training at this stage we can conclude that *shadowing*, *chunks* and *appeal for authority* were better developed than the rest of the strategies. These results show that the training on oral communication strategies in the interview task improved the use of those strategies by both the high and low proficient groups with a s light difference that marks the high proficient students as relatively better users of oral CSs than the low proficient groups (this can be seen by projecting the circles of the groups on every oral CS).

Results Obtained from the Oral Storytelling Task

In this set of data, as in the interview task, a total number of 232 oral storytelling productions were analyzed. The results of the One-Way ANOVA-test shown in table 3 above reflect the use of CSs by the four groups in the pre and post-tests. Again, some CSs (restructuring, paraphrasing, gap-fillers, shadowing and providing active response) resulted non-significant in the pre-test. However, in the post-test all the strategies were significant. Once more, the One-Way ANO-

VA-test is not enough to represent all the variables and the Canonical Biplot Analysis will be a good solution to represent and analyze each and every variable.

Comparing the Variables between Groups

As previously explained, applying the Canonical Biplot Analysis to the data provides a global comparison of the four groups in all the variables based on Wilks' Lambda that is similar to a t-test employed globally. The results of the oral storytelling task are shown in table 4 below. Again there is a high level of interpretation of the data which expresses the degree of goodness of both variables and groups. As marked in the table below both axes 1 and 2 demonstrate an eminent level of representation (96.118 and 99.722) with a global contrast based on Wilks' Lambda that gives a p of 3.1035e-098. Generally, the Wilks' Lambda (as a general t-test) asserts the interpretability of all the groups and variables including the ones resulted non-significant in the One-Way ANOVA-test shown in table 3 (this means that they are well represented in the plan and can be compared and contrasted). Consequently, all the variables and groups are well represented and completely reflected in plan 3 generated by the Canonical Biplot Analysis to interpret the results of the oral storytelling tasks in the pre and post-tests.

Table 3. The One-Way ANOVA-test results of the oral storytelling task

Variable	Total	Explained	Residual	F	Sign.
CPSO	116	12.908	102.092	4.72	0.00386
RPSO	116	8.126	106.874	2.838	0.04124
PPSO	116	8.147	106.853	2.846	0.04083
AAPSO	116	39.007	75.993	19.163	0
ARPSO	116	10.882	104.118	3.902	0.01078
GFPSO	116	3.746	111.254	1.257	0.29266
SPSO	116	5.399	109.601	1.839	0.14419
PARPSO	116	6.045	108.955	2.071	0.10803
CPOSO	116	106.868	8.132	490.633	0
RPOSO	116	101.431	13.569	279.067	0
PPOSO	116	107.426	7.574	529.542	0
AAPOSO	116	99.124	15.876	233.104	0
ARPOSO	116	104.492	10.508	371.25	0
GFPOSO	116	105.643	9.357	421.504	0
SPOSO	116	107.825	7.175	561.02	0
PARPOSO	116	107.486	7.514	534.025	0

PSO: pre-test storytelling oral task.
POSO: post-test storytelling oral task.
P: paraphrasing.
R: restructuring.
S: shadowing.
AA: appeal for authority.
AR: asking for repetition.
GF: gap-fillers.
PAR: providing active response.
C: chunks.
F: f-Snedecor.
Sign: significance P<0.05

On the whole, we can state that all the results of the One-Way ANOVA-test on table 4, are represented in the plan that the Canonical Biplot Analysis provides (even the ones that resulted non-significant). From all the previous analysis of the collected data in the pre and post-tests of the oral storytelling task, we can conclude that the Canonical Biplot Analysis produces a thorough diagnostic of all the available numerical information, unlike the other statistical tests that ignore the non-significant variables and limit the representation of the data to the most developed ones making the scope of interpretation restricted. All in all, in the following Canonical Biplot plan representing oral storytelling task we can clearly see the differences between groups in each and every variable.

Once more, the analyzed data includes 232 protocols in both pre and post-tests (60 of each low proficient group and 56 of each high proficient group). The collected data was, as previously mentioned, analyzed following the taxonomy of the actual investigation. As seen from plan 2 above the control groups C1 and C2 are overlapping when projected on restructuring in the post-test (highly negative level of use of restructuring because the projection results in the opposite direction of the variables). This projection on one variable can be generalized on all the variables and can be interpreted as a high level of similarity between the two control groups in both pre and post-tests. Thus, both the control low proficient group (C1) and the control high proficient group (C2) demonstrate a very low level of use of oral CSs in the pre and post-tests in the oral storytelling task.

As far as the experimental groups are concerned, we can realize that the projection of the circles standing for the groups in the plan (E1 and E2) show important differences between the groups in both the pre and the post-tests. Generally, the high proficient group E2 produced more oral CSs in the pre-test and eventually their level of development of the use of oral CSs was higher in the post-test (see the projections in plan 2 above). To be more specific the high proficient groups used a higher total number of oral CSs than the low proficient in the post-tests. However, the experimental low proficient group used a higher number of help seeking strategies in the pre-test than the experimental high proficient group (see plan 2 above: projecting the center of the circles of E1 and E2 on appeal for authority can show a lower production of E2 than E1 in that variable).

Table 4. Global contrast based on Wilks' Lambda

Dimension	Eigenv.	%Expl.	Cumm.	TSS	ESS	F	p-value
1	8.69	96.118	96.118	76.512	75.512	2819.109	0
2	1.683	3.604	99.722	3.831	2.831	105.703	0
3	0.467	0.278	100	1.218	0.218	8.154	0

p-value: 3.1035e-098.

These differences in the types and number of the CSs used by the high and the low proficient groups confirm once again the first and the second hypotheses of this study expecting the low proficient students to use less CSs than the high proficient ones and suggesting that the low proficient groups will use help seeking strategies more than the high proficient EFL ones. Although the experimental high proficient group (E2) used more oral CSs than the experimental low proficient group (E1) in the post-tests, this does not disesteem the development in the frequency of use of oral CSs by that group because as we can see on the plan there are considerable differences between the results of the pre and post-tests produced by the experimental low proficient group. An example of this evolution is seen on the plan in the projection of the center of the circle of E2 on the variable restructuring in both pre and post-tests. In this projection the line of the projection on the variable is longer in the post-test than in the pre-test which assures the improvement of use of oral CSs by this group.

All in all, the plan gives evidence that the overall number of CSs increases after the training and that the frequency of use of CSs in the post-test was higher than the pre-test and reveals that the use of help *seeking strategies* (appeal for authority and asking for repetition) and *energy and time-saving strategies* (chunks) was relatively higher than the use of the rest of the oral CSs. Summing up, in the pre-test there is an over-reliance on some strategies (paraphrasing, restructuring and appeal for authority); whereas in the post-test there is a global development of all the oral CSs which confirms the third hypothesis of the actual study and assures that the training on oral communication strategies in the oral storytelling task improved the use of those strategies by both the high and low proficient groups (reflected in the projection of the circles on every oral CS in the pre and post-tests).

To have a closer look at the oral CSs that improved in the post-test in the oral storytelling task we can assert that the mostly developed strategies are *providing active response*, *shadowing* and *paraphrasing*. The general remark that presents itself at this level is that in the oral tasks (interview and storytelling) all the strategies profited from the strategy-training and that the use of oral CSs in the oral post-tests was considerably elevated if compared to the oral pre-tests.

CONCLUSIONS

This study gives evidence of the teachability of CSs and provides teachers and syllabus designers with results that can lift EFL syllabi out of the traced route to prevent learners from running into any problems. EFL syllabus should enhance the learners' communicative competence and even include strategy training on productive CSs. In this case, the expression strategy "training" means focusing the students' attention on specific strategies, making them aware of why they are important, how they work and when they may come in useful, and also having them practice the strategies in guided activities.

Hence, the conclusions drawn from this study are represented as follows:

1. Statistically, it is found that the low proficient subjects used less CSs in the pre-test than the high proficient ones. This finding shows that the study level variable has a significant effect on the subjects' use of CSs. This puts in doubt the idea of the inverse relationship between the subjects' level of proficiency and the number of CSs employed.
2. The subjects' level of proficiency is shown to exert a strong effect on their strategy preference in the pre-tests. In other words, as suggested in the research hypotheses, the low proficient groups tended to favor oral help-seeking strategies in the pre-tests; however, in the post-test the participants demonstrated a high degree of use of all the introduced oral CSs.
3. Although both groups benefited from the training significantly, the high proficient group had better results than the low proficient group in both oral and written tasks.

Though many of the results of the actual study have already been reported by previous researchers (Al-Haj, 2011; Cohen and Macaro, 2007; Mariani, 2007; Nakatani, 2010; Jamshidnejad, 2011 and Jidong, 2011), what distinguishes these findings from others is that it includes a strategy training that raises the participants' awareness of a set of productive CSs with practice of each strategy alone and then of all the CSs together. The study also relates the use of these strategies to real contexts and shows their usage in the situations of non-exact communication, which is perhaps the real nature of all communication. In this way, the strategy training helps to bridge the gap between the classroom and the outside reality and between formal and informal learning. Hence, this study provides a unique contribution to research in this field and brings a new evidence that supports the importance of the strategy training in the EFL context. Furthermore, the investigation included different types of tasks that eventually had different demands and contexts, and, consequently, generated heterogeneous data.

However, not all CSs are worth mentioning in a classroom context; therefore, being eclectic is very important in designing a real communicative EFL syllabus. Focusing on productive strategies can favor hypothesis formation and therefore learning. However, not all productive strategies can be dealt with in the same way. The used tasks should be adapted to the target strategy for the learning to occur. Consequently, as Oxford (1990) arguments heightening awareness to strategies focuses learners' attention on the process of language learning and their stage in L2 acquisition, improving comprehension, storage, retrieval and use of the learning material and ultimately improving language learning.

For this reason, strategy training may be fruitful, by making learners more aware of why they are doing a particular learning task. Another argument in favor of strategy training is that it gives learners the tools to be more self-directed or autonomous and less dependent on the teacher. Hence, we stand for introducing oral and written CSs in EFL syllabus because we believe that those strategies may lead to better performance that can get stored easily in the memory. They can also help students to maintain communication making them more productive and helping them to have better control over their use of the language by promoting self-moni-

toring. Furthermore, CSs encourage risk-taking and offer the learners the opportunity to cope with communicative difficulties and to avoid communication breakdowns.

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