

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between language proficiency and the types of CSs employed when postgraduate students belonging to different ethnic groups (Arab and Iranian) with differing levels of English proficiency interact.

Chapter One provides the background to the study while Chapter Two contains the theoretical and empirical aspects of studies on CSs. The taxonomy of CSs by Dornyei and Scott (1997) was adopted for the study. The methodology and instrumentation used was described in Chapter Three. In order to achieve the objective of the study 12 Arab and Iranian participants having high and low English proficiency were divided into three groups (high-high, low-low and high-low proficiency in English). Each group included 4 participants whose conversations were audio-recorded for 6 hours in natural real-time interaction in an informal setting. The analysis and findings of the study were presented in Chapter Four.

#### **5.2 Research Conclusions**

The overall conclusion to the study will be presented via introducing the summary of the results derived from answering the research questions to the study. The research questions were presented with four sub-categories (see 1.4); however they will be merged in this section.

##### **5.2.1 Research Question 1**

What are the CSs used by high/low proficiency Arab/Iranian speakers while communicating in English with each other?

Both Arab and Iranian participants in the high-high and the low-low group used 18 out of 26 types of CSs. In the high-low group both Arab and Iranian high proficiency participants also used 18 types of CSs while the low proficiency Arab and Iranian participants in this group used 19 out of the 26 types of CSs.

### **5.2.2 Research Question 2**

Which communication strategies are most often used by high/low proficiency Arab/Iranian speakers while communicating in English with high/low proficiency Arab/Iranian speakers?

All three proficiency groups i.e. the high-high, the low-low and the high-low used direct strategies more frequently than interactional strategies. Participants in the high-high group used L1-based resource deficit related direct strategies more frequently compared to the L2-based resource deficit-related direct strategies. The most frequently used CSs in the high-high group were code switching, self-repair and literal translation. Similar to the other two proficiency groups, Arab participants in the high-high group used literal translation and message reduction more frequently than the Iranian participants in the same group. Iranian participants in the high-high group used code switching most frequently. Participants in the low-low group most frequently used literal translation, self-repair and message reduction. Iranian participants in the low-low group used circumlocution about two times more frequently than the Arab participants in the same group. In the high-low proficiency group, literal translation, message reduction and self-repair were the most frequently used strategies. Both high proficiency Arab and Iranian participants in the high-low group used circumlocution more frequently compared to the low proficiency speakers in the same group. They also used message reduction and circumlocution more frequently than the participants in the high-high group. Both Arab and Iranian low proficiency participants in the high-low group excessively used literal

translation. Literal translation, message reduction and approximation were more frequently used by the low proficiency participants in the high-low group compared to the participants in the low-low group.

### **5.2.3 Research Question 3**

Are there significant differences in the use of communication strategies between participants of low and high proficiency levels of English?

Results derived from the statistical analysis (t-test) of the data show that there are significant differences in the use of CSs between participants of different proficiency levels. In this analysis it was shown that language proficiency affected the use of all purpose words, circumlocution, code switching and asking for clarification.

### **5.2.4 Research Question 4**

What is the correlation between the use of communication strategies and low and high proficiency levels in English?

Results derived from the statistical analysis to determine the correlation coefficients of different CSs and low and high language proficiency levels show that there is a positive correlation between language proficiency and the use of message abandonment, circumlocution, use of all purpose words, word coinage, use of similar sounding words, omission, code switching, self-repair, self-rephrasing, direct appeal for help, indirect appeal for help, comprehension-check, own accuracy check, asking for repetition, asking for confirmation and response. On the other hand results show a negative correlation between language proficiency and the use of message reduction, approximation, literal translation and asking for confirmation.

### **5.3 Implications and Recommendations**

The data revealed that the participants had encountered a number of communication difficulties; however they managed to convey their intended message using a number of CSs. Some researchers (Tarone & Yule 1989 and David 1999) believe that teaching of CSs is possible and desirable as strategic competence is part of the learner's communicative competence. It is facilitated via bridging the gap between classroom and real-life interaction through transferring of L1 skills and finally contributing to the student's security, self-confidence and motivation to communicate. Therefore, the use of these CSs should be encouraged as Faerch and Kasper (1983, p. 33) considering the teachability of CSs suggest that "... if by teaching we also mean making learners conscious about aspects of their (already existing) behaviour, it is obvious that we should teach them about strategies, in particular how to use communication strategies most appropriately". Teaching and practicing the use of linguistic devices for example, the basic structures used in circumlocution such as 'it's a kind of/ sort of' or 'the thing you used for' as suggested by Dornyei & Thurrell (1991) could be of help to learners when encountering language problems. Accordingly the focus of teaching should be on improving the processing skills of language learners which are responsible for the effective use of strategies by making them conscious of CSs available and their potential use. For example 26 CSs were selected for the data analysis in this study; however participants used only 20 of these CSs without being instructed to use them. This could be an area of research for other researchers. The CSs used (without being taught) by the participants of the current should be considered and then a research can be conducted on what possible CSs would be used after making participants aware of the CSs available and their potential use.

Results showed that literal translation, an L1-based resource deficit-related direct strategy, was used most frequently by different proficiency groups; while L2-based and

interactional strategies are most likely to lead to successful communication. Thus, these strategies should be encouraged to provide opportunities to all proficiency levels, for strategy training closer to real-life interaction whenever possible. Moreover, strategic competence is one of the important components of communicative competence, therefore English language syllabi should be designed to create situations in order to develop learners' strategic competence, the ability to use CSs to deal with different communication problems. The data of the current study was provided by recording the communication of participants in real-life social interaction which resulted in the employment of a large number of CSs. Language learners should be encouraged to communicate and practice using their potential knowledge of CSs and also be made aware of the wide gamut of CSs available. Language learners' conversations should be recorded and played back to make them aware of their use of CSs in order to create self-confidence and encourage the use of CSs which will result in the development of strategic competence.

Moreover, the results showed that both high and low proficiency participants in the three proficiency groups considerably used message reduction and omission which can be due to inadequate lexical knowledge. In this respect, course designers should set the emphasis of teaching to be directed towards the use of the range of CSs which will facilitate resolving vocabulary limitations. Furthermore, to overcome the problems of limited linguistic resources, course designers should provide activities which encompass samples of recordings of authentic interactions which could act as a resource base to demonstrate the various CSs used when faced with a problem of limited vocabulary.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

The study revealed valuable insights into the various employments of CSs in social group interaction of different ethnic groups. However, the data was collected from a

small number of participants. Further studies could be conducted to include more participants to gain a better insight of the use of CSs.

This study analyzed the CSs used by male participants. Another direction for further studies could be looking into groups including mixed genders as well as female only participants to determine if gender groups affect the use of CSs.

This study looks at language proficiency and ethnicity. Other factors such as participants' personality and the communicative tasks can be studied to see if there is any relationship between these factors and the CSs used. Such studies would provide useful information for the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This study investigated the type and frequency of CSs employed by two different ethnic groups (Arab and Iranian) with two different first languages (Arabic and Persian) having different proficiency levels (high and low). The participants were divided into three different groups i.e. high-high, low-low and high-low. Results showed that participants with lower proficiency level regardless of their ethnicity resorted to more CSs compared to the high proficiency participants. Literal translation was most frequently used by the low proficiency participants in both low-low and high-low groups while high proficiency participants in the high-high group most frequently resorted to code-switching. In the high-low group circumlocution was the most frequently used CSs by the high proficiency participants. The use of CSs is more dependent on the language proficiency of the participants rather than on their ethnicity. In other words ethnicity does not affect CSs used.