INTERLANGUAGE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

EMPLOYED BY CHINESE EFL LEARNERS

An Mei

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

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การใช้กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารอันตรภาษาของผู้เรียนชาวจีนที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

นางแอน เม

INTERLANGUAGE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY CHINESE EFL LEARNERS

Suranaree University of Technology has approved this thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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แอน เม : การใช้กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารอันตรภาษาของผู้เรียนชาวจีนที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็น
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ดร.สานุช เสกขุนทด ณ ถลาง, 223 หน้า

งานวิจัยนี้รายงานการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับกลวิธีในการสื่อสารอันตรภาษาโดยนักศึกษาในระดับ
มหาวิทยาลัยที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษ (หรือนักศึกษาที่ไม่ได้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นวิชาเอก) ในประเทศ
สาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน จากทัศนะภายในบุคคล และระหว่างบุคคล นักศึกษาเหล่านี้เป็นกลุ่มใหญ่
ที่กำลังเรียนภาษาอังกฤษและจำเป็นต้องใช้กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารเพื่อช่วยการสื่อสาร เนื่องจากไม่ได้
ประสบกับภาษาอังกฤษอย่างเพียงพอในชีวิตประจำวัน การศึกษาครั้งนี้มุ่งระบุความถี่ของการใช้กล
ยุทธ์ในการสื่อสารที่นักศึกษาใช้และศึกษาผลของระดับความสามารถทางภาษาที่สองของนักศึกษา
งานสองแบบ สาขาที่เรียน และเพศภาวะ ที่มีต่อการใช้กลยุทธ์การสื่อสาร นอกจากนั้นยังได้ศึกษา
การใช้กลยุทธ์สี่กลุ่มและผลสำเร็จของการใช้กลยุทธ์ในการสื่อสารเหล่านี้ของนักศึกษาอีกด้วย

ประชากรในการศึกษาวิจัยครั้งนี้ประกอบด้วย นักศึกษาชั้นปีที่หนึ่งที่ไม่ได้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษ
เป็นวิชาเอก จำนวน 117 คน จากสองวิทยาลัย ในมหาวิทยาลัยกุ้ยโจ ได้แก่ วิทยาลัยอักษรศาสตร์
และวิทยาลัยวิทยาศาสตร์ ข้อมูลการวิจัยได้มาจากงานสองชนิดคือ งานทางเดียว และงานสองทาง
ตามด้วยแบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างเพื่อตรวจสอบข้อมูลจากหลายส่วน การ
วิเคราะห์ยึดตามอนุกรมภิธานกลยุทธ์การสื่อสารที่ได้รับการพัฒนาขึ้นเพื่อการวิจัยครั้งนี้ซึ่งปรับใช้
จากอนุกรมภิธานในการศึกษาที่ผ่านมา   การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้ทั้งการวิเคราะห์เชิงปริมาณและเชิง
คุณภาพ ผลการวิจัยบ่งชี้ว่า ตัวแปรงาน ระดับความสามารถภาษา สาขาที่เรียน และเพศภาวะ มีส่วน
เกี่ยวข้องกับการใช้กลยุทธ์ในการสื่อสารในระดับต่างๆกันไป

ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า แม้จะมีความแตกต่างในการใช้กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารระหว่าง
นักศึกษาที่มีระดับความสามารถทางภาษาสูงกับนักศึกษาที่มีระดับความสามารถทางภาษาต่ำ
ทั้งสองกลุ่มเลือกใช้กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารชนิดเดียวกัน การเรียบเรียงถ้อยคำใหม่ และการใช้โครงสร้าง
ใหม่ เป็นกลยุทธ์ที่อยู่บนพื้นฐานของภาษาแม่ที่ ใช้มากที่สุดเมื่อประสบความยุ่งยากในพูดการแสดง
ความคิดในภาษาเป้าหมาย   นักศึกษาที่มีระดับความสามารถทางภาษาสูงใช้กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารสอง
ชนิดคือ การขยายใจความ และ การประมาณการด้านความหมาย บ่อยกว่านักศึกษาที่มีระดับ
ความสามารถทางภาษาต่ำอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ ในทางตรงกันข้าม นักศึกษาที่มีระดับความสามารถทาง
ภาษาต่ำใช้กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารแบบการสลับภาษาและการหลีกเลี่ยง เช่น หลีกเลี่ยงหัวข้อและการละ
ทิ้งข้อความอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ โดยมีความถี่มากกว่านักศึกษาที่มีระดับความสามารถทางภาษาสูง

กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารที่ศึกษาในการวิจัยนี้ถูกใช้โดยนักศึกษาในงานแบบทางเดียวและงานแบบสองทางในระดับที่แตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารแบบการเรียบเรียงคำพูดใหม่ การขยายใจความ การพูดซ้ำและการใช้โครงสร้างใหม่ ปรากฏบ่อยที่สุดในงานแบบทางเดียว ในขณะที่กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารอีก 3 แบบ คือ การขอความกระจ่าง การตรวจสอบความถูกต้องเชิงบวก และการตรวจสอบความถูกต้องโดยอาศัยรหัส เป็นกลยุทธ์การสื่อสารที่ผู้เรียนใช้บ่อยที่สุดในงานแบบสองทาง

ผลการวิจัยยังพบความแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญระหว่างนักศึกษาอักษรศาสตร์และนักศึกษาวิทยาศาสตร์ในการใช้กลยุทธ์การขอความกระจ่าง นอกจากนี้ยังพบความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญระหว่าง นักศึกษาชายและหญิงในการใช้กลยุทธ์การสื่อสาร 2 แบบคือ การหลีกเลี่ยงหัวข้อและการตรวจสอบความเข้าใจ มีการใช้กลยุทธ์ที่อยู่บนพื้นฐานของภาษาแม่อยู่บ้างเล็กน้อยโดยนักศึกษาทั้งสองระดับความสามารถภาษาซึ่งอาจเนื่องมาจากความแตกต่างระหว่างภาษาจีนและภาษาอังกฤษ

การวิเคราะห์การใช้กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารเหล่านี้ทำให้เราเข้าใจอย่างลึกซึ้งถึงกระบวนการที่สลับซับซ้อนในการรับรู้ภาษา และทำให้เราเข้าใจวิธีการที่จะช่วยผู้เรียนพัฒนาระบบอันตรภาษาของตนเอง ผลการวิจัยครั้งนี้อาจมีส่วนช่วยในการสอนภาษาอังกฤษให้กับนักศึกษาจีนที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ โดยให้ผู้เรียนตระหนักถึงกลยุทธ์การสื่อสารที่อยู่ในคลังความรู้ของตนเอง และโดยการส่งเสริมให้ผู้เรียนใช้กลยุทธ์การสื่อสารเหล่านั้นบ่อยมากขึ้น

สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ   ลายมือชื่อนักศึกษา_____

ปีการศึกษา 2552   ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา_____

AN MEI : INTERLANGUAGE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

EMPLOYED BY CHINESE EFL LEARNERS. THESIS ADVISOR :

DR. SANOOCH SEGKHOONTHOD NATHALANG, Ph. D., 233 PP.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES/INTERLANGUAGE/COMMUNICATIVE

COMPETENCE/ CHINESE EFL LEARNERS

This present study reported an investigation into interlanguage CSs used by

College English students (or non-English major students) in China from both

intra-individual and inter-individual views. These students were a large group who

were studying English and needed to use CSs to facilitate their communication

because they did not have sufficient exposure to English in daily life. More

specifically, the study sought to determine the frequency of the common CSs used by

the students and the extent to which the use of these strategies is affected by

students' L2 proficiency as well as by two types of task, academic field and gender.

Furthermore, it investigates the use of four strategy groups. And also, it examines the

success of these CSs employed by the students.

The subjects of the present study included 117 non-English major first year

students from two colleges in Guizhou University, College of Arts and College of

Science. The data were collected by means of two kinds of task, namely, one-way

task and two-way task. A follow-up questionnaire and a semi-structured interview

were also used to triangulate the data. This analysis was guided by a taxonomy of CSs developed for the present study and adapted from several taxonomies in the literature. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were conducted to analyze the data. The results indicated that these variables of task type, proficiency level, academic field and gender were related with CSs use to different degrees.

Findings revealed that despite the differences between the high and low proficiency students in the use of certain CSs, both of them resorted to the same type of CSs. *Paraphrase* and *restructuring* were the most two common *IL-based CSs* used by all the students when they came across difficulties in expressing themselves in the target language. The high proficiency students used the two CSs *generalization* and *approximation* significantly more often than the low proficiency students. In contrast, the low proficiency students used *language switch* as well as *avoidance CSs* like *topic avoidance* and *message abandonment* significantly more often than the high proficiency students.

The CSs investigated were used by the students in the one-way task and the two-way task to significantly varying degrees. The CSs *paraphrase*, *generalization*, *repetition* and *restructuring* occurred most commonly in the one-way task while the three CSs *clarification request, positive confirmation checks* and *code-based confirmation check* appeared to be the most commonly used ones in the two-way task.

There was a significant difference between Arts students and Science

students in their use of *clarification request*. Significant differences were also found between male students and female students in the use of two CSs *topic avoidance and comprehension check*. There were few *L1-based CSs* used by Chinese EFL learners of both high and low proficiency probably due to the lack of similarity between Chinese and English.

Analysis of these strategies provided us with rich insights into the complex process of language acquisition and gave us ideas about how to help learners develop their interlanguage system. The findings of this study could be great help in the teaching of English to Chinese EFL learners by making them aware of CSs already in their repertoire and by encouraging them to use CSs more frequently.

School of English   Student's Signature   _____

Academic Year 2008   Advisor's Signature   _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
App	Approximation
CC	Comprehension check
CCC	Code-based confirmation check
CET-SET	College English test-spoken English test
CME	Chinese Ministry of Education
CR	Clarification request
CSs	Communication strategies
EFL	English as a foreign language
FL	Foreign language
Gen	Generalization
HP	High proficiency
IL	Interlanguage
ITAs	Interaction between teaching assistants
LAD	Language acquisition device
LS	Language switch
LT	Literal translation
LP	Low proficiency
MA	Message abandonment
MR	Meaning replacement

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (Continued)

NL	Native language
NS	Native speaker
NSMT	Nation-wide standardized matriculation test
NNS	Non-native speaker
OCSI	Oral communication strategy inventory
OR	Other reformulation
Par	Paraphrase
PCC	Positive confirmation check
Rep	Repetition
Res	Restructuring
SLA	Second language acquisition
TA	Topic avoidance
TL	Target language
WC	Word coinage

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language (FL) learners may come across various communication problems when their interlanguage (henceforth, IL) is deficient and lacks the necessary resources. In order to best convey their messages and remain in the conversation until their communication goal is reached, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners need to employ communication strategies.

1.1 Theoretical Background of the Study

The notion of "interlanguage" has been central to the development of the field of research on SLA (Second Language Acquisition). In the past few years research emphasis in the field SLA has shifted. Linguists and researchers are becoming more interested in the study of the learning process than the learning product, in the behavior of learners than that of teachers, in the development of communicative competence than that of linguistic competence (Widdowson, 1978; Ellis, 1982; Taylor, 1983). The focus for language teachers and teacher trainees has been shifted from teaching methods to the interpretation of the learner's IL. IL develops with the shift and continues to exert a strong influence on both the development of SLA theory and the nature of some central issues like communicative competence in that field. Meanwhile, different types of IL learners such as the language of second and foreign language learners have been investigated as a result of

the development of SLA.

IL theory is an appropriate starting point because it was the first major attempt to provide an explanation of learners' system, and many later theories (such as Tarone's variability models) were development of it (Ellis, 1995). Like all theories, IL is dynamic, constantly adapting to new information. Early IL theory was informed by the research that investigated learners' errors and the general pattern of L2 development (see Chapter 2.3). There have been some changes in the way in which some of the psycholinguistic processes shaping IL are viewed. For example, native language (NL) transfer is viewed as operating selectively; some things transfer from the NL to influence IL, and some things do not. Therefore, research of IL has expanded far beyond its original focus on phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis, to include the sociolinguistic component of communicative competence.

IL represents an attempt to analyze the learner's developing linguistic system in a more systematic way. A widely accepted definition of IL is "a separate system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a target language norm" (Selinker, 1972, p. 214). As a separate system, IL is clearly different from both the learner's native language (NL) and the target language (TL) being learned, but linked to both NL and TL by interlingual identifications in the perception of the learner, i.e. a judgment made by learners about the identity or similarity of structures in two languages. As a separate system, IL is evidenced when adult L2 learners attempt to express meaning in a language they are in the process of learning. IL is usually thought of as characteristic only of adult L2 learners who have passed puberty. The term IL is now used by theorists of very different persuasions. In short, the idea of IL is founded upon the assumption that an L2 learner, at any

particular moment in his learning sequence, is using a language system which is neither the L1, nor the L2. It is a third language, with its own grammar, its own lexicon, its communication strategies and so on.

In the book titled *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication* (Kasper, 1983), the introduction part states that researchers have concentrated on the following aspects, irrespective of these types of IL in focus:

(1) the IL as a *linguistic system*, described relative to various types of IL users at different stages of their learning process;

(2) the *learning process*, described in terms of the IL user who builds up and extends his system;

(3) the IL *communication process*, described in terms of the reception/ production processes in the IL user and the way he makes use of his IL system for communicative purposes.

The researcher aims at a description and classification of observable IL phenomenon in (1). Best-known among such descriptions are probably error analyses of the language of L2 learners. Studies in (2) focus on the learning process as it is reflected in IL use. IL research in (3) is aimed at the description and explanation of IL communication. Communicating in IL refers to the ways the learner uses his IL system in interaction. Here, the area of IL speech production has received considerable attention, whereas the receptive side has been less thoroughly investigated (Færch & Kasper, 1983). The area of IL studies in this research is restricted to the use of strategies in IL communication for the reasons that will be stated below.

Using communication strategies is characteristic of IL communication. There

are four aspects of a foreign language learner's IL development that can influence language development, i.e. morpheme acquisition, learning strategies, the affective factors and communication strategies. Research on IL development of foreign language learners has shown that when faced with communication difficulties in various classroom activities, learners tend to use communication strategies (henceforth, CSs) to cope with these difficulties. Analysis of these strategies provides us with rich insights into the complex process of language acquisition and gives us ideas about how to help learners develop their IL.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

Nowadays it is still a trend that foreign language teachers are adopting communicative language teaching (CLT) --- the approach which has characterized the last three decades, that is, teaching second languages for the ultimate goal of communication with other speakers of the L2. This approach aims at developing learners' communicative competence. Applied linguists have for some time suggested that communicative competence includes a major component, usually termed strategic competence, which refers to the ability to get one's meaning across successfully to the interlocutors in an interaction when problems arise in the conversation. If learners are well equipped with strategic competence, they will be more successful in communication. As a major component of communicative competence, strategic competence needs researchers' attention because such a study may not only illuminate the nature of communicative competence but also shed some light on the development of learners' communicative competence. Strategic competence is of theoretical and practical significance, and is worthwhile being fully researched.

Strategic competence is composed of mastery of various verbal and non-verbal communication strategies (Swain, 1980). It is generally accepted that "the mastery of communication strategies may be called into action either to enhance the effectiveness of communication or to compensate for breakdowns in communication" (Swain, 1984, p. 189). According to Faerch and Kasper (1983), cited as a central source in Kasper and Kellerman (1997, p.2) communication strategies are "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal". For example, L2 speakers trying to communicate with an interlocutor may use a communication strategy such as paraphrasing if they do not know or cannot access a particular lexical item. Kasper and Kellerman argue that this definition fits within what they call "the intra-individual view", a view widely held by early researchers in the field, which saw communication strategies as underlying processes occurring in individual mind and importantly which did not have to engage the interlocutor for resolution.

The opposing view has been termed "the inter-individual view" with Tarone as one of its main proponents. Tarone (1983, p.65) saw communication strategies as used by both the IL speaker and the interlocutor in attempts to "... bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the second-language learner, and the linguistic knowledge of the target language interlocutor in real communication situations". Requests for clarification and comprehension checks are two examples of interactional communication strategies, which operate on input which is far ahead of the learner's current IL competence and size it down to what the learner can manage. According to Larsen Freeman and Long (1991), "... all CSs are helpful for acquisition because they enable learners to keep the conversation going and thereby provide more

possibilities for input". However, this is not the whole story.

There have been a number of claims about how interaction may provide opportunities for learners to test target language hypotheses and to "notice the gap" (Schmidt & Frota, 1986) between their IL and the target language. Kinahan and Selinker (1997) argue that researchers may have overlooked the possibility that communication strategies could be used as a learning tool to reveal the gaps between a learner's interlanguage and the target language. Both inter-individual and intra-individual views on CSs will be taken into consideration when we analyze our data which in turn should show the choice of CSs.

This present study investigates the IL CSs of Chinese EFL learners. The interest in the issue of CSs sprang mainly from the nature of the interaction among non-English major college Chinese students in class. Those students may have a relatively not bad repertoire of the target language, but they still have difficulties in communication with their peers. They make "a systematic attempt to express meaning in the target language, in situations where the appropriate systematic target language rules have not been formed completely" (Tarone et al., 1983, p. 4). The lack of fluency or conversational skills that students often complain about is, to a considerable extent, due to the underdevelopment of strategic competence. Since strategic competence involves strategies to be used when communication is difficult, it is of crucial importance for FL learners. Learners may employ CSs to keep their conversations going smoothly and build up their English conversation by their cooperative participation. However, to my knowledge, there have been few studies of CSs related to learners' IL development in China, especially with the examination of variables such as proficiency, task type, academic field and gender.

This study attempts to investigate CSs from the IL perspective in settings where non-English major students communicate in English with native speakers or with one another. It is hoped that the study may shed light on CSs employment by Chinese learners of English as a result of the investigation of CSs. If possible, the result of the study also may cast some light on syllabus design, language testing, curriculum development and teaching methodology in China.

1.3 Context of the Study

With China's opening up and reform policy promoted by the government, English language learning has gained more and more momentum all over the country. Chinese EFL learners should be equipped with the most needed communicative competence in English in order to cope with the new situation.

The importance of English learning can be found in the nation-wide entrance examinations (or called Nation-wide Standardized Matriculation Test). Only those high school graduates who pass the examinations get to study in a college or university. All examinees have to be tested in English besides other subjects of their major. Their grades in English count toward their total scores. The higher the score, the better chance they will have for entering first-rate universities. The entrance examinations mean very much to all the people in China.

Although English learning in China has been attached much more importance and indeed the progress is still going on in terms of EFL teaching and learning, the situation is not so satisfactory especially concerning learners' communicative competence. Most of the college graduates are, for example, "deaf and dumb" when facing foreigners and are handicapped in their work after graduation. A reform of

English education in China is therefore impending. In 1990, the Chinese Ministry of Education (CME) started a profound teaching reform to improve English education so as to meet the needs of qualified English-speaking professionals by the society. In the past fifteen years, great achievements have been made in the teaching reform. However, it seems that the emphasis has been placed more on reading comprehension than the other three skills. Once the graduates are in the real world outside the school, they still face a lot of communication problems.

Recently, College English Reform carried out in 180 universities all over China at the request of CME is a hot topic. The reform aiming at improving students' listening and speaking abilities has aroused much heated discussion among teachers in the circle of college English teaching. All teachers seem to agree that over decades, college English teaching in China had cultivated students' fundamental language skills, such as reading, listening, writing, translation, with a focus on students' skills to pass examinations of English. Hence, many of our college students, after more than 10 years of learning English, may have developed their reading and writing abilities, but still find trouble in communicating fluently and effectively. This is a kind of paradox. Students are often frustrated by face-to-face interaction in English. This context makes us refer back to the language classroom that should be made more communicative and foster communicative language use. In addition, researchers and teachers in China suggest that students' inadequate communicative competence is probably responsible for this paradox (Chen, 1990).

The component of communicative competence most neglected by language course developers and teachers, however, is strategic competence. The assumption that strong strategic competence leads to high communicative competence has already

been theoretically proved (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). One can develop learners' communicative competence by building up their strategic competence, that is, their ability to use communication strategies that allow them to cope with various communication problems that they might encounter.

Communication strategies, as one of the factors which affect IL development, have been investigated by researchers since the notion of CSs was offered in 1972 by Selinker. Chinese EFL learners have been found to employ IL CSs in their English communication with their peers. College English students (or non-English major students) in China are considered a larger group who is studying English and need to use CSs to facilitate their communication considering that they do not have enough exposure to English in daily life. Therefore, they may have formed their own IL system that can provide them with various CSs in interaction. The present study investigated their CSs employment in communication with NSs or with their peers.

1.4 Significance of the Research

Communication strategies are used by learners to resolve communication problems when their IL system seems unequal to the task. In an attempt to communicate meanings, when the learner feels that the linguistic item needed is not available to him, he can resort to a variety of CSs in getting that meaning across. The linguistic forms and patterns used in such attempts may become more or less permanent parts of the learner's IL.

Given that EFL learners frequently face language difficulties during their communication in English, they have no choice but to use strategies to get their meanings across and compensate for their lack of proficiency in order to facilitate

their interaction. When one student did not remember the English term *can opener*, he or she might try to paraphrase it as "the thing you use to open bottles" or "the thing for opening". A student may resort to an approximation, which means a closest possible term to the intended term. For example, a student used *pipe* for *waterpipe* when he knew it was not correct, but shared enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the speaker. Or a student may try to make up a new word in order to communicate a desired concept, for instance, he coined *airball* for *balloon*.

This ability to deal with language communication difficulties is referred to as 'strategic competence', which is an important component of communicative competence and a contribution to understanding how learners communicate by various strategies (See section 1.2). It is believed that learners can improve communicative competence by developing an ability to use specific communication strategies that enable them to compensate for their target language deficiency (e.g., Bialystok, 1990; Dornyei, 1995). Therefore, it is important to study CSs in order to help EFL learners develop their communicative competence.

The empirical study of CSs employment by Chinese EFL learners is of particular significance. Being connected closely with SLA (Kasper & Kellerman, 1997), CSs study has achieved much more success in western countries than that in China. Since Chen Siqing (1990) conducted research on CSs used by Chinese EFL learners, there have appeared relatively more works on CSs. However, the study of CSs in China is still inadequate and unsystematic. Most research on CSs is restricted to the review of CSs research in other countries (Dai & Shu, 1994; Wang, 2000) and little has been done about empirical research (Gao, 2000). The present study decided

to conduct empirical research on CSs use occurring in EFL learners' performance after careful literature review. Therefore, it is of much significance, particularly in Chinese context.

The present study investigates CSs used by non-English major students i.e. Arts and Science students in high proficiency level and low proficiency level. Those students from two levels are in the process of developing their IL, therefore are assumed to have different IL systems. As a result, different CSs were employed in their interaction with their interlocutors. The results of the study could be of a great help in the teaching of English to Chinese EFL learners by making them aware of CSs already in their repertoire and by encouraging them to use CSs. Hence, the CSs study might throw light on the present college English in China including the syllabus design, language testing, curriculum development and teaching methodology.

Concerning research methodology, this study could be the base for future studies of CSs in terms of variables like proficiency, task type, academic field and gender. It is important not only to examine CSs themselves but also to study them in relation to some other factors which seem to influence the CSs employment. So far, no studies have combined these variables together to get a general picture of CSs use. This study might shed light on the relationship between CSs employment and these variables including proficiency, task type, academic field and gender.

CSs can be elicited from tasks given to students. Engaging L2 learners into communicative tasks seemed to be an alternate means to help them to acquire the target language in a meaningful way. It is believed that in interaction L2 learners used communication strategies to modify and negotiate meaning, and learn to manage communication breakdowns in face of interlocutor's linguistic demands for better and

more precise expression.

In conclusion, gaining knowledge of CSs may develop learners' ability to communicate effectively both in and outside class and to tackle communication problems without facing any unfavorable communication breakdowns. If learners' strategic competence could be enhanced through CSs, they would be more successful in communication. This might be an approach to improve their communicative competence.

1.5 Purposes of the Study

The present study attempts to investigate interlanguage CSs used by Chinese EFL students at Guizhou University in their communication in English from two perspectives of intra-individual and inter-individual events. More specifically, it seeks to determine the frequency of the common CSs used by the students and the extent to which the use of these strategies is affected by students' L2 proficiency as well as by two types of task, academic field and gender. Furthermore, it investigates the use of four strategy groups. Lastly, it also examines the success of these CSs employed by the students.

1.6 Research Questions

The study is designed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the different types of CSs employed by Chinese EFL learners?

2. Is there an effect of learner's L2 proficiency, task, academic field or gender on types of CSs employment?

3. Is there an effect of learner's L2 proficiency, task, academic field or gender on the main four categories of CSs employment, namely, avoidance CSs, IL-based CSs, L1-based CSs and negotiation CSs?

4. Are the CSs employed by the learners successful? If yes, what is the effect of learner's L2 proficiency, task, academic field or gender on the success of CSs employment?

1.7 Definitions of Key Terms

Chinese EFL learners in the study refer to Chinese students who learn English as a foreign language. As bachelor degree students, the subjects major in Arts and Science, not in English. They are at their first year in Guizhou University. They are studying English Listening & Speaking course in the academic year of 2007.

L2 proficiency refers to learners' general ability in the target language. In the present study, L2 proficiency is operationally determined not only by students' English scores of Nation-wide Standardized Matriculation Test (NSMT) taken shortly before they entered the university, but also by College English Test-Spoken English Test (CET-SET) given to students after they entered the University. The subjects in the present study are of two groups: high proficiency group and low proficiency group.

Task type in the present study includes two kinds of task, namely, one-way task and two-way task. Concept identification adopted in the one-way task requires only the speaker to convey the message without necessarily engaging the interlocutor in the conversation. However, role play in the two-way task involves both the speaker and the interlocutor in the negotiation of meaning so as to reach a communicative goal. Both concept identification and role play are used in the study to elicit CSs from the

subjects.

Academic field as one of the four variables in this study refers to two fields, which are Arts and Science. Arts students are from Chinese and Economics majors while Science students are from Optics and Computer majors. The two fields are representative of major types in Guizhou University since it is a key comprehensive university in China.

Interlanguage communication strategies in this study mean CSs used by learners when their IL system cannot be matched with speaking tasks. In this case, they adopt various CSs to achieve their communication goals. Since what the language learners produce in the process of learning a language differs from both L1 and the target language, it is called an IL, or is said to result from learners' IL system.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The researcher realizes that it is by no means possible to investigate IL CSs involving many variables simultaneously, and then chooses proficiency, task, academic field and gender in relation to CSs employment by Chinese learners. The field of IL CSs is still waiting to be explored further, especially in China. The present study is only an attempt to investigate it from a certain perspective. There are some limitations of it.

1. The subjects of the present study are 117 Chinese EFL non-English major students who fall into only two fields --- Arts and Science. The results of the study, thus, may not be generalized to all Chinese EFL learners.

2. A variety of factors influence CSs employment and their success. Our study considers only four factors --- task, L2 proficiency, academic field

and gender. Other factors are also important and worth studying like learners' individual differences, previous learning situation, and motivation etc.

3. The study is concerned only with CSs that are used when learners' IL systems seem unequal to tasks in terms of lexical items and syntax. In actual communication, CSs occur at all levels of language use, such as morphology and sociolinguistics etc.

4. Production and reception are two sides of communication. The present study concentrates mainly on CSs in IL production. CSs in IL reception are not scratched so much.

1.9 Summary

This chapter gives a description of the theoretical background and the context of the investigation as well as rationale and significance of the research. Then the research purposes and questions are provided. Lastly, definitions of key terms and limitations of the study are also dealt with.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature related to IL CSs research. It begins with strategic competence within the general framework of communicative competence, followed by definitions and taxonomies of CSs. Then, related studies are reviewed concerning factors affecting the use of CSs. The chapter ends with a summary of studies on CSs.

2.1 Framework of Communicative Competence

Throughout the linguistic history, there is no consensus on what communicative competence should include. However, most models of communicative competence posit a role for CSs. In order to illustrate the development of communicative competence, three main and influential contributions to communicative competence need to be reviewed in the following, which include the works of Chomsky, Hymes, and Canale & Swain.

Chomsky's insistence in the 1950s and 1960s on abstracting language from everyday context led to more focus on linguistic or grammatical competence. Chomsky argued that linguistics theory should be concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, who knows the language perfectly when applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. Before the mid-1960s linguistic competence was defined narrowly as grammatical knowledge of idealized speakers. Grammatical

competence, therefore, has become the main aim of EFL teaching and learning for a long time. Chomsky's view does not account for other important aspects of the language, the social and cultural factors that a language involves.

Hymes (1971) was one of the linguists questioning the dominance of Chomsky's characterization of what constitutes the study of linguistic competence. Hymes was among the first to use the term *communicative competence* to denote the human ability to use language appropriately in different settings, which is considered to include sociolinguistic competence. For Hymes, the ability to speak competently not only entails knowing the grammatical rules of a language, but also knowing what to say to whom in what circumstances and how to say it. In Hymes' view, "there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless" (1972, p. 45)

After Hymes, there appeared a growing literature on communicative competence and its various aspects were further explored (Davis, 1989; Taylor, 1988; Canale and Swain, 1980, Canale, 1983; Widdowson, 1983, 1984, 1989). In their attempt to offer a clear, all-embracing conception of what it means to know a language, Canale and Swain (1980) proposed a modular framework of three and later four components (Canale, 1983) to describe communicative competence.

Canale and Swain (1980) offered a widely cited proposal of communicative competence, which takes into consideration communication strategies in addition to grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence which are considered inadequate for a communicative approach to language teaching and learning. Canale (1983) further proposed that this theoretical framework for communicative competence covers four main areas of knowledge and skill: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence.

Grammatical competence is concerned with mastery of vocabulary and rules of word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, spelling and linguistic semantics, i.e. the elements and rules of the language code itself. Such competence has the direct focus on the knowledge and skill required to understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances. It corresponds to Chomsky's linguistic competence and what Hymes intends by what is "formally possible".

Discourse competence concerns mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres: for example, oral and written narrative, an argumentative essay, a scientific report, a business letter, and a set of instructions each represent a different genre. Unity of a text is achieved through cohesion in form and coherence in meaning. It seems to be partially associated with Chomsky's linguistic competence

Sociolinguistic competence addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction, and norms or conventions of interaction (See Hymes 1967). Social appropriateness is regarded as the primary condition of communicative competence.

Strategic competence can help one get the meaning across successfully to communicative partners, especially when problems arise in the communication process. A lack of strategic competence may account for situations when learners with a firm knowledge of grammar and a wide range of vocabulary get stuck and are unable to carry out their communicative intent.

Strategic competence is composed of mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action for two main reasons: (a) to

compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting conditions in actual communication (e.g. inability to recall something) or to insufficient competence in one or more of the other areas of communicative competence; and (b) to enhance the effectiveness of communication (e.g. deliberately slow for rhetorical effect). Canale and Swain (1980) suggested that this type of competence is demonstrated through communication strategies. Typical examples would be the use of paraphrase, avoidance of difficulties, repetition, requests for clarification, and comprehension checks etc.

Canale and Swain's main contribution to communicative competence theory is that they have integrated into their model communication strategies that people often employ to cope with difficulties arising in the course of communication.

2.2 Introduction to CSs Research

It is generally thought that communication strategies were first invoked by the American linguist, Larry Selinker (1972) in his paper entitled "Interlanguage" to account for errors made by learners of a second language. But he didn't go into detail about the nature of these strategies. Varadi (1973) was the first to investigate this phenomenon experimentally but little work was published on the topic. The following attempt to provide a framework for analysis of CSs is Tarone and her associates (Tarone, 1977; Tarone, Cohen & Dumas, 1976).

Dornyei (1997) stated in his review that the real "career" of CSs started in the early 1980s. First, Canale and Swain (1980), and Canale (1983) broadened the concept of communicative competence by referring to CSs as strategic competence and including it as the primary component of the subcompetency (See Section 2.1).

Second, Færch and Kasper (1983) published an edited volume that put together the most important published papers into one collection and contained some important studies in that period. These two studies were followed by a growing number of publications in the 1980s focusing primarily on the identification and classification of CSs, and their teachability.

In the second half of 1980s, a large scale of empirical projects were carried out and their results both shed light on various aspects of CSs use and challenged some aspects of the previous taxonomies. The 1990s brought further empirical and conceptual analysis and work on the teachability issue also remained in the foreground of research interest. During 1990s one project has to be mentioned as a landmark in CSs research, namely, the collection of papers under review edited by Kasper and Kellerman (1997). This volume is concerned not only with the major defining criteria of CSs, the general principles of research methodology and the predominantly lexical orientation of the research, but also with some of the key contributors to the previous work. Whereas earlier papers revolved around the psychological, intra-individual nature of CSs with but little notice of strategic behaviour in genuine verbal interaction, this volume collects more grounded in sociolinguistics, examining CSs as part of genuine interaction in authentic social contexts.

In addition to being a concept in the recent theorizing relation to the nature of communicative competence, CSs also represent an integral part of the more classical theory of "interlanguage".

2.3 The Nature of Interlanguage

In what follows, the notion of IL is discussed in some detail as it represents an important development in the theory of SLA. While there is general agreement that conversational interaction can facilitate IL development, CSs in conversation are thought to be one of the factors affecting IL development. Therefore, some relevant IL thoughts are significant to be reported in the present study.

Interestingly, the term "interlanguage" was again coined by Selinker, in recognition of the fact that L2 learners construct a linguistic system that draws, in part, on the learner's L1 but is also different from it and also from the target language (TL). Thus IL represents an attempt to analyse the learner's developing linguistic system (learner language) in a more systematic way. Slightly different conceptualizations of learner language were referred to as "approximative system" by Nemser (1971) and as "transitional competence" by Corder (1967). However, the notion of IL seemed to be the one which caught on, and which is used in the literature on SLA in the 1990s. And this study employs the term Interlanguage (IL) to refer to "a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a TL norm" (Selinker 1972, p. 214).

IL is usually thought of as characteristic only of adult second-language learners, that is, learners who have passed puberty and thus cannot be expected to be able to employ the language acquisition device (LAD). LAD is an innate language learning structure which was instrumental in their acquisition of their native language. Children acquiring L2 are thought to have the ability to reengage the LAD and thus to avoid the error pattern and ultimate fossilization which characterize the interlanguages of adult L2 learners.

Central to the notion of IL is the phenomenon of fossilization --- that process in which the learner's IL stops developing, apparently permanently. This led Selinker to hypothesize that adults use a latent psychological structure (LPS instead of a LAD) to acquire second languages. The five psycholinguistic processes of this LPS which shape IL were hypothesized (Selinker 1972) to be (1) native language transfer, (2) overgeneration of target language rules, (3) transfer of training, (4) strategies of communication, (5) strategies of learning.

Ample research evidence shows that *native language transfer* does play an important role in shaping learners' IL systems, while it is not the only process involved. Selinker (1972, 1992, following Weinreich 1968) suggests that the way in which this happens is that learners make "interlingual identifications" in approaching the task of learning a L2. 'Interlingual identifications' are the basic learning strategy, where you make something the same what cannot actually be the same with TL. *Overgeneration of TL rules* is a process which is also widely observed in child language acquisition: the learner shows evidence of having mastered a general rule, but does not yet know all the exceptions to that rule. So, for example, the learner may use the past tense marker *-ed* for all verbs, regular and irregular alike. *Transfer of training* occurs when the L2 learners applied rules learned from instructors or textbooks. *Strategies of communication* are used by the learner to resolve communication problems when the IL system seems unequal to the task. When, in the attempt to communicate meaning, the learner feels that the linguistic item needed is not available to him, he can resort to a variety of CSs in getting that meaning across. The linguistic forms and patterns used in such attempts may become more or less permanent parts of the learner's IL. *Strategies of learning* are used by the learner in a

conscious attempt to master the TL. One such strategy of learning is learners' conscious comparison of what they produce in IL with the NL and a perceived target, setting up interlingual identifications (See *transfer* above).

Research evidence was provided to show that all five of these psycholinguistic processes could affect the construction of interlanguages, and a call for more research went out. The present research is undertaken in response to this call to investigate one of the hypothesized processes, focusing on CSs.

In his 1972 paper, Selinker stated clearly that the relevant data to be used in the study of IL consisted of utterances produced by L2 learners when they were trying to communicate meaning in the TL. The relevant data were clearly not learner utterances produced in response to classroom drills and exercises where the learner was focusing on attention on grammar rules or TL form. Although there was disagreement on the issue *"what data shall one use to study IL?"* and the issue is unsolved in SLA research, the present study agrees with Selinker in considering data from speaking interaction.

In conclusion, this section reviews some aspects which remain central to the investigation of the IL system developed by L2 adult learners. Generally, IL is the result of a shift in focus from improving teaching materials to systematically observing how L2 learners develop a non-primary linguistic system.

As a central component of IL, the notion of CSs refers to the approach that "learners use to overcome the inadequacies of their IL resources" (Ellis, 1994, p. 396). A number of theoretical approaches have been therefore used to characterize CSs.

2.4 Definitions and Classifications of Communication Strategies

It is difficult to find a rigorous definition of communicative strategies on which CSs researchers have reached an agreement. There have been many definitions proposed regarding CSs of second language learners. The following definitions will provide us with an insight into the nature of communication strategies.

> CSs are mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared. (Tarone 1981, pp. 288)

> CSs are potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal. (Færch and Kasper, 1983, pp. 36)

> CSs are the conscious employment by verbal or non-verbal mechanisms for communicating an idea when precise linguistic forms are for some reasons not available to the learner at that point in communication. (Brown, 1987, pp. 180)

All the previously mentioned definitions support the claim that CSs are employed when L2 learners encounter a problem in communication. Bialystok (1990) points out that although CSs researchers offer various definitions, these definitions seem to share the following three main features:

1. Problematicity: Strategies are adopted when problems in either learning or production are perceived and may interrupt the communication. It is not part of the routine operations of language use.

2. Consciousness: It refers either to the learner's awareness that the strategy is being employed for a particular purpose, or the awareness of how that strategy might achieve its intended effect.

3. Intentionality: It refers to the learner's control over those strategies so that particular ones may be selected from the range of options and deliberately

applied to achieve certain effects.

Although she also notes that none of them is unique to the concept of CSs, the three features have been found so far in most CS definitions. The present study is mainly based on Tarone's and Færch & Kasper's definitions and shares the three features above.

2.4.1 Intra-individual View of CSs

As Kasper and Kellerman (1997) put the term *communication strategies* (CSs):

> "Identification of CSs depends to a great extent on what one considers CSs to be, and in this respect, it matters very much whether one conceives of CSs as intra-individual or inter-individual events." (pp. 3)

According to Færch & Kasper (1983), cited as a central source in Kasper and Kellerman (1997) CSs are "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal." The intra-individual view locates CSs in models of speech production (e.g. Dechert, 1983; Færch & Kasper, 1983) or cognitive organization and processing (Bialystok, 1990). The taxonomy of CSs from Færch and Kasper (Section 2.5) is thus dependent on this model. In early work, most notions of CSs restricted the concept to problem-solving activity. Færch & Kasper's definition of CSs (See above) relates to the learner, or more precisely, to the problems experienced by the learner, in the planning and execution of speech production. The definition conceives of CSs as mental plans implemented by the L2 learner in response to an internal signal of an imminent problem, a form of self-help that did not have to engage the interlocutor's support for resolution (e.g., Færch & Kasper, 1983, pp.36). This implies that the

learner may make use of a communication strategy without signaling to his interlocutor that he is experiencing a communication problem and consequently, that the presence of a repair on the part of the interlocutor is no necessary condition for the identification of a communication strategy.

Similarly, other researchers, particularly Bialystok (1990) and the Nijmegen Group (i.e., Bongaerts, Kellerman, and Poulisse), pinpoint that CSs are inherently mental procedures with their definition of CSs similar to Færch and Kasper's (1983). Communication research should investigate the cognitive processes underlying strategic language use. They claimed that not understanding the cognitive dimensions of communication use and focusing only on the surface verbalization of underlying psychological processes would lead to taxonomies of doubtful validity. Instead of conducting product-oriented research, Bialystok and the Nijmegen Group recommended communication strategy research adopt a new analytic perspective, focusing on the cognitive "deep structure" of strategic language behavior, which also means inherently mental procedures.

In an attempt to place CSs, in a parsimonious cognitive framework, the Nijmegen Group divided compensatory CSs only into two principle categories: conceptual and linguistic strategies. Regarding the former, speakers manipulate the concept so that it becomes expressible through their available linguistic (or mimetic) resources (Kellerman, 1991 in Kasper & Kellerman, 1997). Conceptual strategies are of two types depending upon alternative ways of rendering the intended lexical item by spelling out the constituent parts of the concept (analytic strategy) or using a substitute referent which shares characteristics with the target item (holistic strategy) Linguistic strategies involve manipulating the speaker's linguistic knowledge through

either morphological creativity or transfer. Kellerman (1991) relabeled linguistic strategies as code strategies so as to extend the category's scope to include nonverbal strategies. However, the biggest shortcoming of Nijmegen Group's approach is that it concentrated on the research of compensatory CSs, but neglected potentially important strategies; namely, reduction and inter-individual strategies from their research.

Bialystok proposed a model of language proficiency which consists of two processing components, analysis of knowledge and control of processing. These components, each specialized for a different aspect of processing, are part of the mechanism responsible for language use and for advances in proficiency. Analysis of knowledge is the process by which mental representations of information become increasingly structured. Both representations of meaning and representations of language are transformed through analysis. The second component is control of processing or selecting attention. In any cognitive activity, at any given time, only some selected portion of available information can be attended.

These two processing components describe operations that are applied to mental representations during language learning and use. The operations have the effect of increasingly structuring the organization of the representations (analysis) and increasingly directing attention to selected aspects of representations (control). They are ongoing processes whenever language is used. It follows that they are also used when communication strategies are employed.

Bialystok's intent to develop a psychologically plausible system of CSs, was similar to that of the Nijmegen Group and her categories are not unlike theirs. In accordance with her cognitive theory of language processing, Bialystok

conceptualized two main classes of communication strategies---analysis-based and control-based strategies. The former involve attempts to convey the structure of the intended concept by making explicit the relational defining features, that is, to manipulate the intended concept on the basis of its analyzed knowledge, for example, providing some distinctive information about it, such as definition. The latter involves choosing a representational system that is possible to convey and that makes explicit information relevant to the identity of the intended concept, that is, holding the original content constant and manipulating the means of reference used to express the concept.

In sum, Færch and Kasper (1983) considered CSs verbal plans within a speech production framework; Bialystok (1990) and the Nijmegen Group regarded CSs as primarily mental events and adopted a cognitive-psychological approach to their analysis. Therefore, being early representative researchers in the field of CSs, Færch and Kasper saw communication strategies as underlying processes occurring in individual mind and importantly which did not have to engage the interlocutor for resolution. Kasper and Kellerman (1997) argue that this definition fits within what they call the "intra-individual view of CSs" (See also Section 1.2).

2.4.2 Inter-individual View of CSs

"Inter-individual view of CSs" with Tarone as one of its main proponents was cited as a key source by Kasper and Kellerman (ibid). Tarone (1983) offered a well-known definition "the term of CSs relates to a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared. (Meaning structures here would include both linguistic structures and sociolinguistic rule structures.)"

This definition introduces an inter-individual perspective. In Tarone's words, "Communication strategies are seen as tools used in a joint negotiation of meaning where both interlocutors are attempting to agree as to a communicative goal" (1980, p.420). The negotiation of meaning as a joint effort between the interlocutors is central to the concept of communication strategies. This inter-individual perspective would allow for an inclusion of various repair mechanisms. If those repair mechanisms were applied to "clarify intended meaning rather than simply correct linguistic form" (1980, p.424), Tarone considered them communication strategies.

According to the inter-individual definition offered by Tarone, CSs are cooperative in nature: the different linguistic codes (in a wide sense) of the interlocutors necessitate a negotiation of the message as intended by one and perceived by the other discourse participant; the learner and his interlocutor are aware of there being a communication problem which they then attempt to solve on a cooperative basis. This implies that both the problem and its solution must somehow surface in the performance, which enables the analyst to identify CSs directly in performance data.

In contrast to intra-individual perspective, the inter-individual approach of CSs focuses on external and interactive strategies and works from performance data in order to consider underlying competence. This view has been adopted from different theoretical orientations such as collaborative theory (Wilkes-Gibbs, 1997), conversation analysis (Firth and Wagner, 1997), and critical sociolinguistics (Rampton, 1997). The inter-individual approach describes observed forms in L2 output with implicit inferences about the differences in the psychological processes that produce them. That is, the inter-individual approach focuses on surface linguistic

realizations (or output) and makes subsequent inferences about the cognitive processes while the intra-individual approach focuses on the hypothesized cognitive processes of the individual and makes inferences about the linguistic features.

Yule and Tarone (1997) state that the focus of these studies, which adopt the intra-individual approach on internal cognitive processes, has resulted in no role for interlocutor's effects in more recent analytic frameworks. Yule and Tarone affirm that the presence of an addressee creates a quite different context "interactive strategies" (e.g., appeal for assistance and mime) and thus it is important not only to investigate CSs from an inter-individual perspective but also from an intra-individual perspective.

Therefore, the aim of the present study is to investigate CSs both from the intra-individual perspective that do not have to result in the interlocutor's interference and from the inter-individual perspective that focus more on how both interlocutors can achieve mutual comprehension.

2.5 Taxonomies of CSs

Taxonomy one is based on Tarone's approach (1980), which highlights social aspects of communication. Cook (2001) argues that both interlocutors are trying to overcome their lack of shared meaning. When things go wrong, both interlocutors try to devise a communication strategy to get out of the difficulty. In Tarone's studies (1977 and 1983), she provided a taxonomy of CSs. Nine subjects were asked to describe two simple drawings and a complex illustration in their L2 (English) and native language. The CSs described in the following were derived from analyzing transcripts of the learners' attempts to refer to a number of objects and

events depicted. They reflect learners' attempts to make themselves understood to their interlocutors. Tarone's taxonomy has served as a basis for subsequent studies of CSs, resulting in further taxonomies (See Varadi, 1980 and Paribakht, 1985). The following taxonomy one is given according to Tarone's approach in the social aspect of communication..

Taxonomy 1

1. **Paraphrase**: Learners paraphrase what they want to say.

   A. Approximation: The learner uses an item known to be incorrect but which shares some semantic features in common with the correct one. Say "animal" for "horse", because the listener will be able to deduce from the context what is intended.

   B. Word coinage: Another form of paraphrase is to make up a new word to substitute for the unknown word---"airball" for "ballon".

   C. Circumlocution: The learner describes the characteristics of the object instead of using the appropriate target language (TL) item---"when you make a container" for "pottery".

2. **Borrowing/Conscious transfer**: Learners fall back on the first language.

   A. Literal translation: The learner translates word for word from the native language. A Chinese student says "I lost my way" rather than "I got lost".

   B. Language switch: The learner uses the native language (NL) term without bothering to translate---"balon" for "ballon".

   C. Appeal for assistance: The learner asks for the correct term from another interlocutor---"What is this?"

   D. Mime: The learner uses non-verbal strategies in place of a lexical item or

action---clapping one's hands to indicate "applause".

3. **Avoidance**: Learners do not talk about things which they know are difficult in the second language.

   A. Topic avoidance: The learner simply tries not to talk about concepts for which the TL item is not known.

   B. Message abandonment: The learner begins to talk about a concept but is unable to continue and stops in mid-utterance.

     Taxonomy two is based on the approach of Færch and Kasper (See 2.4.1), which concentrates on the psychological dimension of what is going on in the L2 speaker's mind. L2 learners want to express something through the second language but encounter a hitch. To get around this psychological difficulty, they resort to CSs. Færch and Kasper divide these into two main groups: achievement and avoidance. Achievement strategies are also named by some researchers as compensatory strategies while avoidance strategies are also known as reduction strategies (See Tarone, 1981; Færch & Kasper, 1983; Bialystok, 1990; Dornyei & Scott, 1997; Nakatani, 2005). Although different researchers employ different terminology on CSs, these notions, as a matter of fact, refer to more or less the same thing.

     According to Bygate (1986), both achievement and reduction strategies are used to compensate for a problem that a learner anticipates in expressing what s/he intends. An achievement strategy aims at communicating the whole message as perceived by the speaker. Examples are the use of L1 items, translation, paraphrasing, miming or point, eliciting/asking for help from interlocutor. Accordingly the message is not lost or altered. A reduction strategy, on the other hand, aims at either communicating an imperfect message or communicating a message other than the one

intended initially. In other words, it results in reducing the message (i.e. the learner fails to convey all of the intended messages and therefore, only a partial solution may be managed) or finding no solution (i.e. the learner abandons the message and perhaps tries to express other things s/he can manage). The following taxonomy two is given from Færch and Kasper (1984). In this taxonomy, compensatory strategies are included in achievement strategies. However, this taxonomy puts emphasis on compensatory strategies under the item of achievement strategies.

Taxonomy 2

1. **Achievement strategies**: A learner tries to solve the problem in communication by expanding his/her communicative resources.

    A. Compensatory strategies

        a. Code switching: The learner uses a form in the L1. Thus in the foreign language classroom, learners frequently share the L1 with their teacher, which enables them to code switch extensively between L2 and L1.

        b. Interlingual transfer: Whereas with the code switching strategy learners ignore the IL code, strategies of interlingual transfer result in a combination of linguistic features from the IL and the L1.

        c. Intra-lingual transfer: The result of the strategy is a generalization of an IL rule, but the generalization is influenced by the properties of the corresponding L1 structures.

        d. IL based strategies: The learner has various possibilities for coping with communication problems by using his IL system.

            (a) Generalization: The learner solves problems with IL items which they would not normally use in such contexts. The learner assumes

that his original goal can be reached by using a generalized IL item.

(b) Paraphrase: The learner solves problems with a construction which is well-formed according to his IL system. The learner focuses on characteristic properties or functions of the intended referent.

(c) Word coinage: A word coinage strategy involves the learner in a creative construction of a new IL word.

(d) Restructuring: Whenever the learner realizes that he cannot complete a plan, he develops an alternative plan which enables him to communicate his intended message without reduction.

(e) Approximation: The learner uses an item known to be incorrect but which shares some semantic features in common with the correct one. Say "animal" for "horse", because the listener will be able to deduce from the context what is intended.

e. Co-operative strategies: These involve a joint problem-solving effort by the learner and his/her interlocutor.

(a) Direct appeal: The learner overtly requests assistance, e.g. "what's this?".

(b) Indirect appeal: The learner does not request assistance, but indicates the need for help by means of a pause, eye gaze etc.

f. Non-linguistic strategies: In face-to-face communication, learners frequently resort to non-linguistic strategies such as mime, gesture and sound-imitation. They are often used to support verbal strategies. An important function of non-linguistic strategies is to signal an appeal to the interlocutor.

B. Retrieval strategies: These are used when the learner has a problem locating the required item but decides to preserve rather than use a compensatory strategy.

   a. Waiting: The learner waits for the item to come to him.

   b. Using semantic field: The learner identifies the semantic field to which the item belongs and runs through items belonging to this field until he locates the item.

   c. Using other languages: The learner thinks of the form of the item in another language and then translates it into the L2.

2. **Reduction strategies**: These are attempts to do away with a problem. They involve the learner giving up part of his/her original communicative goal.

   A. Formal reduction strategies: These involve the avoidance of L2 rules of which the learner is not certain (i.e. tentative hypotheses) or which he cannot readily gain access to, e.g. "He asked him to go…" instead of "He made him to go…".

   B. Functional reduction strategies: These involve the learner avoiding certain speech acts or discourse functions, avoiding or abandoning or replacing certain topics, and avoiding modality markers, e.g. "He does sport" instead of "He plays…".

The above two taxonomies on which most of the further CSs research are based are still narrow in that they focus predominantly on learner's gaps in lexis and overwhelmingly on individual production. However, William et al. (1997) proposes an inter-individual approach which focuses on comprehension problems in particular, both how they are rooted in the interactional context and how they are resolved. This

taxonomy three includes terminologies different from those in the above two traditional taxonomies. CSs in this taxonomy deal not only with lexical gaps but also other kinds of gaps in knowledge, for example, gaps which are primarily information-based, rather than code-based. Such gaps in knowledge tend to show up in comprehension problems rather than in production. The following is the taxonomy adapted from William et al. (1997).

Taxonomy 3

1. **Confirmation checks**: These are utterances that seek to confirm that the material in an interlocutor's previous utterance has been heard or understood. The listener is provided most of the information to respond to or to confirm. The typical responses for these checks are yes/no as a single word utterance or followed by more information.

   A. Code-based (medium-based) confirmation checks: repeating the same or part of the previous linguistic utterance for confirmation. Example: S: …Also I have same problem in the vocabulary? T: In vocabulary? S: Yes.

   B. Positive confirmation checks: The speaker offers the listener information and implies that s/he expects confirmation of it. Example: You said we have answered there in the book, right?

   C. Neutral confirmation checks: It's the same as positive confirmation but the expectation of the speaker is not made clear (that is whether or not to confirm with a positive answer).

2. **Clarification requests**: These are utterances that are made by listeners when they haven't understood. Unlike confirmation checks, clarification requests do not present the listener with information to respond to. Example: What do you mean?

Or sorry, I didn't understand.

3. **Comprehension checks**: These are utterances that are made by the speaker and they attempt to confirm that the listener has understood what the speaker has said. Example: Understand? Or do you know what I mean?

4. **Reformulations**: These utterances offer some modification of the previous utterance.

   A. Self-reformulations: These include modifications of the speakers' output.

   B. Other reformulations: The listener reformulates or models the previous speaker's utterance.

5. **Repetition**: These are exact duplications of what has been uttered.

Reviewing the three taxonomies leads to some comparisons among them. These comparisons can provide us with the characteristics of the three taxonomies separately.

   1. Taxonomy 3 (from Williams et al.) puts most emphasis on the inter-individual feature of CSs. These CSs in this taxonomy are more concerned with both of the interlocutors, not only the speaker but also the listener. How the two interlocutors use CSs to negotiate meaning and achieve comprehension can be reflected in the terminologies of this taxonomy. For example, it includes confirmation checks and clarification requests. However, taxonomy 1 (from Tarone) and 2 (from Færch and Kasper) put more emphasis on the individual production.

   2. Taxonomy 3 focuses more on sentences while taxonomy 1 and 2 focus more on lexical concepts.

   3. Taxonomy 3 includes strategies used to model, reformulate or confirm

previous utterances whereas taxonomy 1 and 2 include more strategies of individual concepts.

4. L1-based strategies do not appear in taxonomy 3 but they exist in the other two taxonomies.

5. It is easy to notice a lot of similarity between taxonomy 1 (Tarone's) and 2 (Færch & Kasper's), although some terms are different. As we see almost all except last one of Tarone' categories fit within compensatory strategies. Besides Tarone's "topic avoidance" and "message abandonment", Færch & Kasper also include meaning replacement as a functional reduction. The use of a "meaning replacement" strategy implies a more general reference to the subject. "Generalization" and "paraphrase" correspond approximately to Tarone's "approximation", "circumlocution" respectively. Both of Færch & Kasper and Tarone include "word coinage" in their taxonomies.

Those comparisons offer a clearer picture of CSs taxonomies from both inter-individual and intra-individual perspectives. In Al-Humaidi's work (2002), he also reviewed taxonomies related to his work but in psychological and sociolinguistical aspects (cf. pp. 24). Based on the three taxonomies, a comprehensive taxonomy was adapted to deal with the data emerging from the present study (See Chapter 3.7).

2.6 Effects of Different Factors on CSs Use

The effects of various factors on strategy use have been examined in previous research. Among them, the effects of learner proficiency, L1 and task type appear most frequently. Some studies explore the relationship between L2 language

proficiency and CSs. Others investigate the effect of L1 on the use of certain types of CSs. Still, others deal with the influence of different tasks on the employment of CSs. However, there are some studies which examine two or more variables together. Those factors are reviewed in the following and they are 1) the effect of L2 language proficiency, 2) the effect of L1, and 3) the effect of tasks.

2.6.1 The Effect of Language Proficiency on the Use of CSs

Ellis (1984) worked at evaluating communicative performance in a second language and stated a shift of focus from correctness, intelligibility and style to CSs. He demonstrates how the study of two of the communicative strategies (i.e. avoidance and paraphrase) might supply a basis for evaluating the performance of a second language learner. The researcher's analyses show that L1 children resort less to avoidance and paraphrase strategies than L2 children who have been learning the target language for about a year. Tarone (1977) also found that less able students preferred an avoidance strategy whereas the more able preferred paraphrase.

There is much evidence to suggest that the use of CSs varies according to the proficiency level of the learner as Bialystok (1990) writes "The first factor that may be expected to predict the choice of a specific communication strategy is the proficiency level of the speaker. The strategies make different linguistic demands, and may be too sophisticated for less advanced language learners" (p. 48). The relationship between language proficiency and CSs becomes the subject of much CSs research. Bialystok (1983) finds that advanced learners use significantly more L2-based strategies and significantly fewer Ll-based strategies than less advanced learners. In addition, the more advanced they are, the more sensitive they become to some specific strategies.

In Tarone and Yule's study (1987), they worked with twenty-four learners of English as a second language and nine native speakers of English. Two learners participated in each session. One plays the role as a speaker and the other as a listener. Speakers had three separate tasks: (a) to describe four objects one after the other; (b) to give instructions for the assembly of an apparatus; and (c) to narrate a story reporting actions in a classroom scene. The speaker was required to look at a set of visual stimuli on a video screen and to describe by words to the listener what s/he perceived on the screen. The listener had a set of pictures and his/her task was to listen to the speaker's message and identify which of the three pictures best fit the description. This research has shown (a) the native speakers seemed to use more circumlocution and approximation than did the non-native speakers, and (b) there are clear differences between NSs and the NNSs; typically NNSs provided more detail than what NSs feel necessary, though at times they also provided less. This study shows that there are differences between communication strategies used by NSs and NNSs.

It seems that the proficiency of speakers could be one of the reasons affecting the employment of CSs. Poulisse and Schils (1989) also examine whether proficiency is related to the use of compensatory strategies. They explored three groups of three different proficiency levels---advanced, intermediate, and beginning learners of English. The subjects were tested individually on three tasks. The first task was a picture description task with pictures containing 40 concepts. The second task was a story-retelling task. After listening to recordings of four stories in Dutch, the subjects had to retell them in English. Pictures related to the stories were to make sure that subjects would not omit many essential details. The third task was a 20-minute

interview with a native speaker of English on topics such as school, holiday, cooking, and sports.

They observe that the effects of proficiency level were minimal. The university students used more holistic conceptual strategies in the story telling and the oral interview but more use of linguistic transfer in the story-telling task only. Poulisse and Schills provided the following explanation for this finding: learners of lower proficiency level did not have sufficient FL vocabulary at their disposal to come up with suitable approximations (i.e. the use of holistic conceptual strategies). Therefore, they resorted more to the linguistic transfer strategies, which enabled them to make a greater use of the L1.

Chen (1990) is one of the few researchers who have investigated communication strategies by Chinese ESL learners. Chen looked into the relationship between the language proficiency of the Chinese ESL learners and their strategic competence. Twelve English major students were chosen to participate in his experiment. They are divided into two groups according to their general language proficiency. One group, which was taken as a high proficiency group, was composed of six second-year postgraduates. The other group, which was taken as a low proficiency group, was composed of six third-year undergraduates. Three males and three females comprised each group. Each subject was required to communicate two concrete and two abstract concepts from 24 concepts to a native speaker interlocutor in an interview situation.

The findings showed that the low proficiency group employed significantly more communication strategies than the high proficiency group did. Linguistic-based CSs are more frequently employed by the high-proficiency learners

whereas knowledge-based and repetition CSs are more extensively used by the low proficiency learners. Chen offered the following two main reasons (a) CSs serve to compensate for the inadequacies in the target language. High proficiency learners are equipped with more knowledge of the target language and have relatively richer resources to draw upon in communication. Therefore, they appeal less to CSs. (b) High proficiency learners are more able to estimate the linguistic knowledge they have at their disposal. They are more aware of the limitations of their target language resources and more accurate in their production of the problems they might encounter in communication; therefore, in most cases, they are able to solve the communication problems in the planning process or choose more appropriate and effective CSs.

The above two studies of Poulisse & Schils and Chen have achieved the same finding although they employed different tasks. Both of them found that high proficiency learners require fewer CSs to convey meaning. However, Nakatani (2006) recently reached a different finding in research including two phases. The participants for Phase 1 were 400 Japanese university students (45% men and 55% women). The participants for Phase 2 of the study were 62 female students enrolled in mixed-level EFL classes at a private university in Japan. Phase 1 was to develop the Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) and Phase 2 was to analyze learners' strategy use elicited by the OCSI. All participants ($N = 62$) were divided into three groups according to their results on the oral test scores averaged between the two judges. Group 1, the best performing group, consisted of 18 participants whose scores ranged from 4 to 7. These participants can be categorized as minimally hesitant, flexible speakers who contribute to the conversation. Group 2, the middle group, comprised 18 other participants whose scores ranged from 2.5 to 3.5. Although these

speakers can communicate in English to achieve task goals, they are somewhat hesitant and less flexible than the students in Group 1. Finally, Group 3 comprised 26 participants with scores of 1 to 2. These students are very hesitant speakers and face significant difficulties communicating in English.

The results indicate that a significant difference was found in students' awareness of strategy use according to their oral proficiency level. In particular, it is interesting to note that there was a significant difference in the use of negotiation of meaning strategies between the two proficiency groups. The high oral proficiency group reported frequently using such strategies. This behavior indicates that there could be a positive relationship between the incidence of negotiated interaction and an increase in language proficiency. The higher level learners also reported using strategies for maintaining conversational flow and controlling affective factors. The lower level learners, however, used these positive strategies infrequently.

It is very necessary to notice that this study focuses on the negotiated strategies and other specific strategies, such as social affective strategies and fluency-oriented strategies. That's why a different finding comes from it. In another study, Khanji (1996) investigates 36 EFL students divided into three levels according to their placement test results, which were obtained before they joined an intensive English program. The three levels are low, intermediate, and advanced. The students were asked to come to the researcher's office in pairs for their oral examination of the conversation course taught by the researcher. Each pair of students was randomly assigned from the three levels to do the oral test. The oral test employed the principles of the strategic interaction approach. This approach is built around the use of "scenarios" which require students to work through communication problems and act

minidramas on realistic themes. Students were asked to resolve problems by interaction in pairs for a period of five to ten minutes.

In one scenario, for example, students took part of a waiter and a diner who had to deal with the various problems in a restaurant about the food, the bill, or the service. Depending on the students' personal opinions, they could interact freely to resolve a communicative issue in various ways. In this way, the data was not structured and artificial elicitation techniques were avoided. Conclusions drawn from the data showed that more achievement strategies were used by advanced and intermediate groups than by the low level group learners who were opted to resort to reduction strategies. Khanji explained that as the proficiency level grows, students gained more creativity and flexibility in using language to overcome their communicative problems. The high percentage of reduction strategic use among low level students is an indication of their low proficiency level. The finding is consistent with the results of Tarone (1977) and Ellis (1986). Those researchers reported that the less able students whom they investigated opted for reduction strategies.

Khanji's study tries to combine both the interactional (inter-individual) and the psycholinguistic (intra-individual) approaches to provide a clear picture of CSs in relation to foreign language discourse and proficiency, which is innovative and interesting. Khanji maintains that it is not enough to analyze CSs from the interactional perspective. He argues that (a) the isolation and organization of specific strategies reveal only the surface of a more complex phenomenon and communication; (b) lists of strategies may seem simplistic and one-dimensional, unless they can be used to elucidate some deeper aspect of language, thought and communication. Therefore, a psycholinguistic approach is also adopted to observe CSs.

William et al. (1997) studied the interaction between teaching assistants (ITAs) and English native speaker (NS) undergraduates. The aim of the study was to discuss the question of how these NNS (non-native speaker) teaching assistants, with rather limited oral proficiency, and NSs could achieve mutual comprehension. The setting was the chemistry laboratory sessions where the ITAs as teachers helped undergraduates complete their experiment tasks. The researchers identified such questioning strategies as confirmation checks, clarification requests, comprehension checks and reformulations (See Section 3.7 for the taxonomy of the study). The results suggest that mutual comprehension is related to the CSs that the NNSs and NSs employ during their tasks. The following are the results:

William et al. asserted that the goal of the sessions was the execution of a chemistry lab project by students, not language acquisition by the teacher. This setting is one in which the emphasis is on referential communication (i.e. exchanging information) and not on language, the findings may shed some light on the possibilities for acquisition through negotiation of meaning in other, non-classroom settings. The study focuses on the interaction between NSs and NNSs.

As Varonis and Gass (1985) pointed out, most investigations of NNS discourse have focused primarily on interactions between NSs and NNSs (See Long, 1983). Clennell (1994) studies the way in which a specific group of adult second-language learners of English handle a communication problem from a strategic discourse perspective. In other words, where attention has been paid to IL talk (cf. Duff, 1986; Doughty & Pica, 1986 and Ellis & Rathbone, 1987), the motivation behind the study is what the study of learners' language produced under communicative stress can reveal about how learners are able to cope linguistically

within their limited means. The researcher argues that the IL CSs of low-level learners are not adequately captured or explained by existing CSs taxonomies, which tend to focus largely on the individual speaker's short-term strategic plan to negotiate meaning. What emerges from this study of early IL is that learners engage in what is clearly a mutually acceptable, systematic use of linguistic devices such as lexical repetitions etc.

2.6.2 The Effect of L1 on the Use of CSs

Some studies investigating CSs also deal with the effect of L1 on the use of CSs. In Chen's study (1990), he indicates that the language distance between the learners' L1 (Chinese) and L2 (English) is found to affect their choice of CSs. None of the obvious L1-based CSs such as foreignizing, code-switching and the literal translation etc. was found in this study. Chen states that this was probably caused by the great distance between the learners' L1 and L2 because the prerequisite for occurrence of L1-based CSs is formal similarity between the two languages. Even the low proficiency learners did not resort to any L1-based CSs.

Bialystok and Frohlich (1980) put forward that high proficiency learners depended more on L2-based CSs and low proficiency learners relied more on L1-based CSs. This hypothesis is appealing because it is in accord with the psychological process of learning, which involves reliance upon prior learning to facilitate new learning. For elementary learners their only prior learning of language is that of their mother tongue. Therefore, they would rely heavily upon L1-based CSs. But advanced learners would more frequently rely upon their increased knowledge of the target language.

However, this hypothesis does not appear to apply to Chinese EFL learners. Chinese is quite distant from English. This great distance reduces Chinese learners' tendency to use L1-based CSs because they realize that these strategies will not work for them. This finding of Chen's study is consistent with that of Paribakht (1985) whose Persian ESL students employed few L1-based CSs. The hypothesis put forward by Bialystok and Frohlich (1980) might work under the precondition of a formal similarity between learners' L1 and L2. Kellerman (1978) also points out that the adoption of L1-based CSs depends upon the relatedness between learners' L1 and L2.

Ellis (1984) worked with two groups of learners who were asked to tell the story from a series of three pictures describing a race. One group consisted of six L2 learners aged between ten and twelve years. They had been learning English for about one year in Britain. The other group consisted of six native speakers of the same age and from the same school. Each child was audio-recorded telling the story to a teacher from the school.

In order to compare the two groups' use of avoidance and paraphrase strategies, Ellis identified a number of key "information-bits" by anticipating what information ought to be included in a notionally "good" account of the story. Along with these information-bits some preferred ways of encoding were listed. The analyses suggest that the L1 children resort less to avoidance and paraphrase strategies than L2 children who have been learning the target language for about a year. Ellis states:

"the notion of communication strategy may be a useful one for evaluating L2 communicative performance. By attending to the degree to which learners avoid reference to importance items of information, and paraphrase information they do

decide to encode, teachers may be able to form a fairly reliable assessment of learners' performance".

It is likely that some CSs listed by the researcher could be used to evaluate communicative performance. The way suggested by Ellis initiates the idea that CSs could be not only identified and but also measured. This study has practical usefulness for the language classroom. Rather than focusing on correctness, intelligibility, or style, this study suggests that CSs should be a way of evaluating communicative performance in a second language.

In another study by Bongaerts and Poulisse (1989), 30 secondary school pupils and 15 university students of English, all native speakers of Dutch, were divided into three groups of 15 subjects each according to the number of years they had studied English. The subjects were asked to describe a set of the unconventional abstract shapes, both in Dutch and in English.

The results of this study show that L1 speakers and L2 learners handle their referential problems in much the same way when a methodology is adopted which confronts native and non-native speakers with essentially the same problem. In both task versions the subjects preferred to describe the shapes from holistic perspectives. The main difference between the Dutch and the English versions appeared that in the English version the subjects regularly experienced severe word-finding problems in realizing their preferred perspectives. The referential behaviour of the subjects in both task versions could be described in terms of choices between two main strategies, which are holistic (i.e. relating the shape to a natural real-world object) strategies and segmental (i.e. analyzing the referent in terms of its constituent parts) strategies.

2.6.3 The Effect of Tasks on the Use of CSs

In order to elicit CSs from speech production, many kinds of reference tasks have been used in CSs studies. According to Long and Porter (1985), there are two kinds of tasks: one-way and two-way tasks. In the one-way task, only one speaker has information to communicate. It requires transmission rather than exchange of information. Nevertheless, two-way tasks require the exchange of information among all participants, each of whom possesses some piece of information not known to, but needed by, all other participants to solve the problem. Most of the task-related CSs research reveals strategy employment from the two aspects of one-way and two-way tasks.

Poulisse and Schils (1989) carried out a study which involved three groups of Dutch learners of English at three different proficiency levels in order to investigate the effect of task-related factors on the kinds of CSs. The participants were asked to perform three different tasks, i.e. picture description task, the story retelling task and the oral interview. Poulisse and Schils identified and classified the compensatory strategies by means of the process-oriented taxonomies which they claim is a more accurate way to analyze communicative strategies when compared with the product-oriented taxonomies.

Poulisse and Schils reported that the type of compensatory strategies chosen by the subjects was not to any large extent related to their proficiency level. The study is of great significance because it has demonstrated that the nature of the task plays an important role in giving opportunities to negotiate meaning using different communicative strategies so as to ensure mutual understanding among speakers.

Whereas the subjects predominantly used analytic strategies in picture description task, they frequently resorted to holistic strategies and transfer strategies in the story retelling task and the oral interview. The explanation provided for the result is that analytic strategies are generally most informative but also most time-consuming. Therefore, the time limit, which characterizes the kinds of tasks and the presence of the interlocutor, and which allows to check comprehension, encouraged the subjects to use the kinds of compensatory strategies in the kinds of tasks.

In another study, Khanji (1993) compared the effect of two conversation task types: strategic interaction tasks "scenario" which replicates real-life situations and learner's interview tasks on the choice of CSs by EFL Jordanian Arab learners. The subjects of the study were 40 learners of English who were enrolled in two intensive English classes at the University of Jordan. And they were in two conversation courses in the fall term of 1991. These courses were taught by the same instructor using different pedagogical tasks: interview tasks and strategic interaction scenario tasks.

By the end of the term, students from the two classes were assigned to come to the researcher's office in pairs for their oral examination. This oral exam represented nearly seven hours of EFL conversations, which became the interactional data for the study. The results showed that the scenario task group used more achievement strategies (e.g. circumlocution, retrieval, and overelaboration) than reduction strategies (e.g. repetition, massage abandonment, language switch, and appeal for assistance). The frequency of the use of reduction strategies by the scenario task learners was almost half the number for the interview task learners. Khanji

explained this by the differences of the task demands. The interview task learners are asked to interview each other in a question/answer format without having to argue or to defend a given position as in the case of the scenario task where learners are deeply involved in a problem-solving situation.

In order to stimulate a wider range of CSs use, concept identification tasks have been used. Not only are concrete lexical items used as referents, but abstract concepts are included as well. Paribakht (1985) uses this task and justifies the inclusion of abstract concepts as "… to obtain a global picture of the participants' communication of nouns," commenting that "… abstract concepts, lacking visual clues, are expected to place heavier linguistic and cultural burdens on the speakers than concrete concepts" (p. 133). Another study employing the same kind of task for the same purposes is done by Chen in 1990 on 12 Chinese EFL learners.

With regard to inter-individual perspective, different kinds of reference tasks have been explored in more authentic situations where the research is designed to be less experimental and interlocutors play somewhat important roles. In other words, the interactional aspect of communication or collaborative model of communication (Wilkes-Gibbs, 1997) is also taken into consideration. First, direction-giving tasks are favored by many researchers such as Lloyd (1990, 1991, 1992, and 1997). In his studies, the subjects are given a map task in which they have to give delivery directions to their listener. Similar to this task is the information-transfer task employed by Yule and Macdonald (1990), Yule (1991) and Yule, Powers, and Macdonald (1992). Like the map tasks in Lloyd's studies, Yule et al's studies employ map tasks in which the sender has to describe the route so that the receiver can draw it, but these tasks include specific referential conflicts (differences

in some parts of the maps), resulting in more cooperativeness required from the interlocutors. As reviewed in Yule (1997), these tasks provide new information about both sides of the interlocutors, but at the same time, they "contain fixed reference points that increase the shared knowledge, or common ground, for speaker and listener" and therefore "make the communication of further referential information less demanding" (p .51).

The most naturalistic CSs elicitation methods are oral interviews and conversations. Poulisse (1990) uses oral interviews between subjects, non-native speakers of English and a native speaker. The topics of the interviews are partly determined beforehand to assure that unfamiliar concepts are included, forcing the subjects to use CSs. Haastrup and Phillipson (1983) analyze interaction between Danish learners of English and British native speakers. The problem with this kind of elicitation is that CSs use is less likely to be found due to the fact that what the subjects might say is less controlled by the experimenters (Kasper & Kellerman, 1997).

Role plays are sort of conversation between learners which can elicit CSs in relatively authentic settings. It is widely agreed that learning takes place when activities are engaging and memorable. As a semi-authentic and simulation activity, Jeremy Harmer (1983) advocates the use of role-play for the following reasons:

- It's fun and motivating

- Quieter students get the chance to express themselves in a more forthright way

The activity might involve simulating an employee-employer interaction, a clinical interview, a conflict resolution episode, etc. In this way, the role play provides opportunities both to apply course material and to practice communication skills.

Participants are required to play the expected role with one another in this scenario. The whole procedure of role plays are usually video-recorded or tape-recorded and then transcribed for research.

From all of the different kinds of tasks discussed thus far, it is claimed that CSs use varies according to the type of reference tasks and seems to be highly item specific. Poulisse (1990) notices that subjects prefer long informative and analytic strategies in a picture description task. Short, less informative, holistic, and transfer strategies are found more in a story-retelling task and oral interviews. Chen concludes in her study (1990) that abstract concepts induce more CSs of synonyms, antonyms, and exemplification, while concrete concepts produce more CSs of superordinate, componential analysis, and cultural characteristics.

In summary, a prevalent finding of studies that used language proficiency, L1 and type of task as factors affecting the use of CSs is that the frequency and types of CSs differ as speakers' proficiency level differs. This finding is similar to most studies that investigated the effect of language proficiency on strategy use (see Poulisse, 1990 and Poulisse & Schils, 1989). The proficiency differences are not a result of the differences underlying competence but because of the different communication difficulties (e.g. different tasks) and the different linguistic resources the language learner uses to resolve those difficulties (see Young, 1992). Paribakht (1985) explains his finding that

> "… learners' use of CSs has specific characteristics at different developmental stages of their interlanguages. That is, learners seem to abandon or adopt certain CSs and also alter their proportional use of certain strategies as they approach the TL. Learners' behavior in terms of strategy use seems, therefore, to be transactional and dynamic" (p. 141)

2.7 Summary of Studies on CSs

From what has been reviewed in the above, most of studies on CSs conduct researches into the effect of language proficiency, L1 and kinds of tasks with a task-based methodology and with a focus on lexical difficulties.

Although different ways are used to determine the proficiency level of subjects, they come to almost the same finding that the frequency and type of CSs are influenced by learners' language proficiency.

The linguistic distance between L1 and L2 seems to show how often learners resort to their L1 to solve the communication difficulties. Chen (1990) belongs to those researchers who claim that because of the linguistic distance between Chinese and English, the subjects seldom employ L1-based strategies.

Considering the effect of task types on the employment of CSs, the main problem is the difficulty in comparing the results of the studies. Kellerman et al. (1990) state that if each new set of tasks or items generates a unique set of strategies, the situation is likely to achieve the opposite of what it should be; what is required is a system of description that can be applied to any linguistic data irrespective of how those data are elicited; additionally, the study of CSs should reach beyond description to prediction and explanation. In other words, the difficulty in the comparison of the studies' results is not because of the tasks used, but perhaps because of the fact that the researchers haven't achieved generalizability to help them explain CSs employment.

It is generally believed that it is difficult for CSs researchers to regard one taxonomy as being ideal although many researchers prefer a general taxonomy to describe various CSs. Thus because of the difficulty in depending on only one

taxonomy from the literature, it could be beneficial to modify several taxonomies in existence and suggest one taxonomy suitable for the study.

After reviewing the related literature of CSs studies, the present study makes use of intra-individual and inter-individual views to analyze students' data collected in terms of two kinds of tasks. Furthermore, the study explores the relationship between the employment of these CSs and language proficiency, task, academic field and gender. With regard to the two variables, i.e. academic field and gender, the literature review does not tackle them due to the fact that there seems very few information about their effects on EFL learners' CSs use. In this case, this study is hoped to greatly contribute to research on the relationship between CSs use and the two variables, i.e. academic field and gender.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers the methods and procedures used to collect data. It begins with the reasons why quantitative and qualitative methods are employed in this study. Next, characteristics of the subjects, instruments and procedures for data collection are presented, during which a rational and a taxonomy adapted for the present study are provided. Finally content analysis and statistical analysis are used to deal with the data.

3.1 Rationale for the Methodology

In order to triangulate the data, a mixed method including the quantitative and qualitative methods is involved in the present study. From the psychological perspective of CSs, researchers handle carefully all sorts of quantitative data. Because CSs are considered to be underlying psychological processes with no logical necessity for their behavioural outcomes to be clearly observable in speech, these researchers have had resort to tightly constrained methods of eliciting copious strategy tokens (Kasper & Kellerman, 1997, p.11). Thus data collected from the questionnaire are processed through SPSS and data from the recording of the tasks are examined by using the frequency form (See Appendix 9).

However, from the intra-individual perspective of CSs, its use in authentic and semi-authentic conversations has also been undertaken (Haastrup & Phillipson,

1983; Poulisse, 1990). Since the experimenter now has considerably less control over what subjects will say, so the surface manifestations of CSs use become more difficult to track down. This is where retrospective commentary by subjects of their audio-taped performance has proved useful. After the recording is transcribed, content analysis as a qualitative method is used to deal with the performance data. Also, a semi-structured interview is conducted further to be analyzed through qualitative method.

Therefore, this present study includes quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method is used to examine the statistical effect of four variables on CSs and the success of communicative performance. The qualitative method aims to understand the identification and classification of CSs, and better to understand the results from quantitative method.

3.2 Subjects

The subjects of the present study include 117 non-English major first year students from two colleges in Guizhou University, College of Arts and College of Science. The reason for choosing the two colleges is that they are representatives of main major types in China. All of the subjects are undergraduate students including males and females, ranging in age from 17 to 20, and they are from different parts of China. Two groups of 60 students from the College of Arts enroll in the academic disciplines including Chinese and Economics. The other two groups of 57 students from the College of Science enroll in the academic disciplines including Computer and Optics Information. All 117 students from the two colleges are the subjects of the present study.

The researcher selects purposive samples to meet the purpose of the research. Since the present study adopts content analysis to examine those collected data, convenience sampling is also appropriate for the study. Convenience sampling involves choosing the nearest and most convenient persons to act as subjects. This is probably one of the most widely used methods of sampling. In short, purposive sampling and convenience sampling are adopted in the study to achieve the subjects.

There are three particular reasons for choosing first year students as participants: 1) it enables the researcher to know better about their English learning at high school and then helps university teachers make teaching plans for the following years. For example, teachers may think about whether CSs training should be included in their English learning program, 2) it enables the researcher to investigate their employment of CSs within the reach of their linguistic (grammatical) competence. Their linguistic competence can make sure that they have the good English foundation for CSs employment. When they are admitted by the university, their English scores of Nation-wide Standardized Matriculation Test (NSMT) are on average not bad, and 3) it enables the researcher to take advantage of their NSMT English scores to keep them at two different levels since they have just taken their NSMT. This examination is authorized to a great degree in China and is highly valid and reliable (for more discussion on NSMT, See Section 3.4.1).

The subjects' NSMT English score can be obtained at the beginning of the research by administering them a demographic background questionnaire that covers gender, class, academic field and NSMT English score, and how many years they have learned English etc. (See Appendix 1).

The subjects shown in Table 3.1 enroll in the English course taught by the

researcher herself. This course focuses on the improvement of non-English major students' listening and speaking ability. All participants are voluntary. They have similar English learning background, which means all of them have learned English for over six years. On the basis of the English results of NSMT and College English Test-Spoken English Test (CET-SET) Band 4, subjects will be divided into two different proficiency levels (See Section 3.3 for more).

Table 3.1: Subjects of the Study

	College of Arts	College of Science	Total
High Proficiency	30	30	60
Low Proficiency	30	27	57
Total	60	57	117

3.3 Instruments

The present study adopts the following instruments to collect data including 1) speaking tasks, 2) questionnaire and 3) semi-structured interview. A description of each instrument in detail is as follows:

3.3.1 Speaking Tasks

Based on the two views on CSs (See Chapter 2), namely, intra-individual view and inter-individual view, two types of tasks were used to elicit CSs in the present study. The first type of task was designed from the intra-individual view to elicit CSs which are underlying processes occurring in individual mind and importantly which do not have to engage the interlocutor's support for resolution (Kasper & Kellerman, 1997). The type of task corresponding to this perspective is also known as one-way task (Long & Porter, 1985), which requires transmission rather than exchange of information and only one speaker has information to

communicate. In this study, concept identification adapted from Chen (1990) was used to collect the spoken data.

Another type of task was devised from the inter-individual perspective on CSs which focus on keeping the interaction going on by bridging a gap between two interlocutors (Tarone, 1983). This kind of task is considered as a kind of two-way task (Long and Porter, 1985), which requires the exchange of information among all interlocutors, each of who possesses some piece of information unknown to, but needed by, all other interlocutors to solve the problem. The task included in the study is a role play between students. Some situations were offered for students to choose from. One situation, for example, was that students were required to play roles of customer and shop assistance respectively.

Speaking tasks including concept identification and role play were used to elicit CSs when a new term started. Each subject had 3 minutes to complete the concept identification which covers one concrete concept and one abstract concept, adapted from Chen's research (1990). And each pair of subjects had 7 minutes to do the role play task which can depend on a situation asking students to solve some problems in order to achieve their goal. In the role play task, high proficiency subjects were paired with high proficiency subjects and low proficiency subjects were paired with low proficiency subjects in order that their communication can go on smoothly.

All of the concepts had the same semantic meanings for both native speakers and Chinese EFL learners. And each concept within the concrete and abstract category had the same difficulty level because they were checked by two English native speakers and two Chinese professors to ensure that they are universal concepts. Each subject was required to communicate one concrete and one abstract

concept from the 32 to a native speaker (See Appendix 3 for 32 concepts). Two weeks were needed for 117 subjects to finish this task, data from which lasted 6 hours.

The role play task was adapted from BBC website which includes excellent role play activities. This task took another two weeks in which there were 8 hours involved. 30 pairs of subjects were arranged to do the task each week including 15 high proficiency pairs and 15 low proficiency pairs from each college. All of the tasks took a total of four weeks and 16 hour recording can act as the corpus for the study (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Time Allocation of Speaking Tasks for Four Classes

One Week	Class One (n=30)		Class Two (n=30)		Class Three (n=30)		Class Four (n=30)		Total (n=120)
Proficiency	HP	LP	HP	LP	HP	LP	HP	LP	
Concept	3ms	3ms	3ms	3ms	3ms	3ms	3ms	3ms	6hrs
Role Play	7ms	7ms	7ms	7ms	7ms	7ms	7ms	7ms	7hrs
Total	10ms	10ms	10ms	10ms	10ms	10ms	10ms	10ms	13hrs

Note: HP refers to high proficiency and LP to low proficiency

While dealing with these tasks given to them, EFL learners were found to use their IL system and employ various IL CSs in their production process. The process was recorded and transcribed verbatim. At the end of the process, all the data were transcribed and analyzed later by means of content analysis in which a coding system was adopted.

3.3.2 Questionnaire

While doing their speaking tasks, some students were not found to use some CSs, but they were aware of those CSs if asked consciously by answering the questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire is to triangulate the data instruments

and to make sure that the researcher obtains more complete data.

Questionnaires were administered to the subjects after the treatment of speaking tasks in the research. Robson (1993) indicates that questionnaires are very efficient in terms of researchers' time and effort. Oxford claimed, "Questionnaires are among the most efficient and comprehensive ways to assess the frequency of language learning strategy use" (p.25). The two commonly used types of questionnaire items are open-end item and close-end item.

Nakatani (2006) developed an Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) as an instrument for assessing the frequency of listening and speaking strategy use by learners. The OCSI consists of two different parts: strategies for coping with speaking problems with 32 items, and strategies for coping with listening problems with 26 items. The OCSI showed highly acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha .86 for the former part and .85 for the latter part).

The pattern of the questionnaire in the present study is based on Nakatani's OCSI, Dornyei's (2003) *Questionnaires in Second Language Research*, and the taxonomy of CSs adapted for the study (See Section 3.7). The questionnaire includes 18 questions about different CSs employment from the adapted taxonomy. The questionnaire was used to examine CSs for coping with communicative problems related to learners' strategic behaviors in interaction. Participants were required to choose *yes* or *no* in the questionnaire (See Appendix 1 for the questionnaire).

3.3.3 Semi-structured Interview

Wiersma and Jurs (2005, p. 187) pinpoint that the use of interviews has some advantages over the use of questionnaires, although interviews are costly in terms of time and effort. Nunan (1992, p. 149) agrees that semi-structured interview

seems to be popularly used in qualitative designs since they are flexible and it also gives the interviewee a degree of power and control over the course of interview.

In semi-structured interviews, many of the questions are close-ended, offering the respondent a limited range of options with the questions being asked in a predetermined sequence. Other questions are open-ended, allowing the respondents to express themselves freely and fully. Some are suggested by the researcher ("Please tell me about…") and some arise naturally during the interview ("You said a moment ago…can you tell me more?"). The wording of questions will not necessarily be the same for all respondents. The researcher acting as the interviewer might use a number of prompts and probes to encourage the respondent, but what the interviewer is looking for is the respondent's spontaneous view.

The focus of the interview is decided by the researcher and there may be areas the researcher is interested in exploring. The objective is to understand the respondent's point of view rather than to make generalizations about behaviors. The interviewer recorded the answers, either writing the answer down or recording it on tape.

In the present study, based on the speaking tasks and results of the questionnaire above, a semi-structured interview was conducted on 24 participants out of 117 subjects selected randomly from high proficiency level and low proficiency level among the four classes. The researcher prepared three open-ended questions in order to obtain deeper information about students' choice of CSs, particularly L1-based CSs. The questions were designed to have as much flexibility and spontaneity as possible so that respondents could respond in their own words to express their perspectives. The interview was conducted near the end of data

collection by the researcher. While asking interview questions, the interviewer must ensure that these questions are clear and precise. Each interview lasted about fifteen minutes, and be conducted both in Chinese and English so that interviewees were able to express their ideas clearly and thoroughly. All interview data were audio-recorded for later analysis. The main purpose of the interview is to make sure subjects' choice of CSs if there is something unclear in students' output, and particularly to make sure subjects' L1-based CSs use in the current study.

3.4 Procedures

The subjects were divided into two proficiency levels according to proficiency tests --- NSMT and CET-SET Band 4. After that, speaking tasks were used to elicit CSs and spoken data could be collected. Then a questionnaire was given to all subjects. Finally, semi-structured interview was conducted to achieve part of qualitative data. Figure 3.1 can give a general picture of four independent variables, i.e. proficiency, task, field and gender, and one dependent variable, namely, communication strategies.

Figure 3.1: A General Picture of Variables
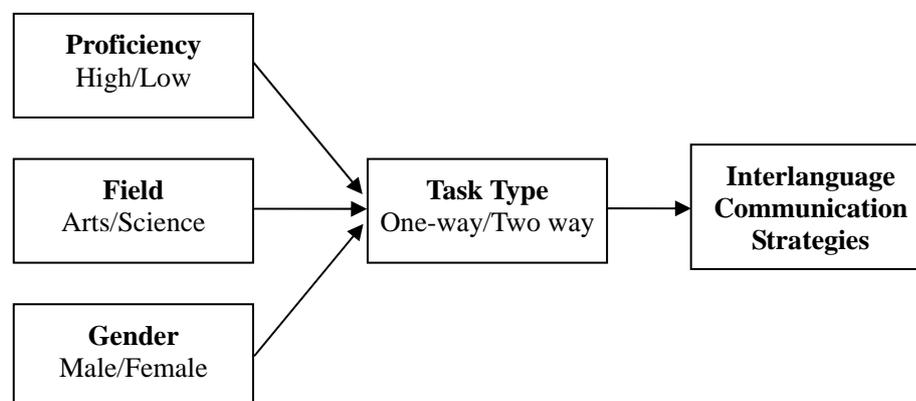
3.4.1 NSMT

NSMT include Chinese, Politics, Maths and English. Our criterion for proficiency levels based on NSMT English scores is that a median score was found to divide all subjects. The full score of NSMT English is 150. The reason for using their English results of NSMT to decide students' English proficiency level is that this examination has high validity and reliability in terms of statistics.

However, this research was to investigate students' speaking communication. Their English NSMT results might not be sufficient to decide their proficiency level because NSMT excludes English speaking part. Thus, the researcher administered an oral test, CET-SET to confirm students' proficiency level previously determined by the NSMT results.

3.4.2 CET-SET

CET-SET is an oral test adapted from Spoken English Test of CET Band 4, which is a well-known College English Test in China. College English Test (CET) is a unified, single course-based and standardized test that includes two levels: CET-4 and CET-6. The test is held twice a year, normally once after nearly the end of each semester, that is, late January and June every year. The CET is a "large-scale standardized test with aims to 1) promote the implementation of the National College English Teaching Syllabus, and 2) measure objectively and accurately the real English ability of college English students in China" (Yang, 2000, p. 197).

Since November 1999, CET-Spoken English Test (CET-SET) has been adopted to examine college English students' English proficiency as a whole in addition to their results of CET which includes listening, reading and writing parts. The oral test has four levels ranging from A to D. Speakers at level A are able to

communicate in English basically without difficulty considering their routine topics. Speakers at level B are able to converse in English with some difficulty that does not affect their communication. Speakers at level C are able to handle routine topics simply in their communication. Speakers at level D have no real functional ability in English. Both CET and CET-SET are administered by the National College English Testing Committee in China.

The subjects in the research are first year students who are not allowed to take CET, but they are in the process of preparing for the test. After the first year study they will be qualified to take the test. The researcher in the study just chooses CET-SET to test students in order to categorize students into two proficiency levels.

Therefore, the current study decides all subjects' L2 proficiency level depending on their NSMT English score and Band 4 CET-SET score. The high proficiency students include those students whose NSMT English score is more than a median score of 106 and the oral test grade is either A or B. In NSMT English test the maximum score is 139 and the minimum score is 60. The low proficiency students are those who have NSMT English score less than the median score and the oral test grade of either C or D. In this study, it is assumed that low proficiency students refer to the earlier stage of IL system while high proficiency students represent those in their late IL system.

3.4.3 Treatment of Speaking Tasks

In terms of concept identification, two concepts (one concrete and one abstract) were specified and written down in English and Chinese to prevent ambiguities and then distributed to one high proficiency subject and one low proficiency subject. The subjects were asked to try to convey the items to the native

speakers---who did not know which concept was being transmitted---without using the exact target words so that they were obliged to make use of CSs so as to convey meaning across. Two native speakers sat separately to identify the concepts and at the same time to rank the success of the communicative performance (for more details, See Appendix 3). The criteria are as follows:

4. very successful---to identify the concept immediately

3. quite successful---easy to identify the concept

2. moderately successful---hard to identify the concept

1. less successful---very hard to identify the concept

0. not successful---unable to identify the concept

To prevent the native speakers from being involved in real participation which is not required in this type of task, a list of constrained comments for the native speakers were used to ask for clarification or further information during subjects' performance. These are:

1. I don't understand

2. I'm not sure what you mean.

3. I'm not following you.

4. It's not clear enough.

5. Could you make that clearer, please?

6. I don't see what you mean.

7. It's still rather unclear.

8. I don't get it.

9. I'm not clear.

10. Could you tell me more?

For the sake of comparison, each concept was used twice, once by a high proficiency subject and once by a low proficiency subject. Therefore, two native speakers were invited to examine the subjects' performance separately, which was audio-recorded and later transcribed. To keep the assessment consistent and achieve the inter-rater reliability, the two native speakers crosschecked the learners' communication performances by listening to all of the recorded data.

In terms of role play, one high proficiency subject was paired with one high proficiency subject and one low proficiency subject was paired with one low proficiency subject. The researcher put them in a situation where they were obliged to use CSs, because they were asked to perform a role play, say, a shopping which needs them to negotiate with each other in order to solve some communicative problems. They acted as a customer and a shopping assistance respectively in a kind of store (for more details, See Appendix 4). The researcher recorded the subjects' performance output. By listening to the recording, two native speakers were invited to determine the success of the communication performance. The criteria provided to them are as follows:

4. very successful---very easy to solve the problem

3. quite successful---easy to solve the problem

2. moderately successful---hard to solve the problem

1. less successful---very hard to solve the problem

0. not successful---unable to solve the problem

Finally, CSs were identified in the transcribed output produced by the subjects in describing the concepts and playing the roles. During the identification process, the subjects' introspective data were collected for the purpose of confirming

the CSs that had been identified and discovering those CSs that could not be directly observed. Thus a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview could serve this purpose.

3.4.4 Transcriptions from the Two Speaking Tasks

Transcriptions were collected from students' communication handling two types of speaking tasks. Students from two proficiency levels were involved in the tasks. Audio recording was available through the process of students' speaking performance.

3.4.5 Administration of Questionnaire

The questionnaire based on the CSs taxonomy adapted for the present study was administrated to all participants including two classes from the College of Arts and another two classes from the College of Science. The questionnaire was distributed after the treatment of two kinds of tasks to help collect data about all participants' introspective data as mentioned above.

3.4.6 Semi-structured Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted to elicit further and detailed information about choice of CSs, particularly L1-based strategies, from subjects who could listen to their role-play part. According to Wen (1999), the purpose of interviewing is to enter into other persons' perspective. It is expected to achieve deeper reasons for the information by this kind of instrument.

3.5 Definition of Communication Strategies for the Study

From the literature reviewed, it can be seen that complete agreement has not been reached on the definition of CSs, but one working definition many researchers

accept is that CSs are "a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his/her meaning when faced with some difficulty" (Corder, 1980, pp. 103). This definition, in accordance with Tarone's (1983) and Faerch and Kasper's (1983) conceptualizations, posits problematicity and consciousness as central features of CSs. Other researchers have conceived CSs by including attempts to "enhance the effectiveness of communication" (Canale, 1983, pp. 11). After taking the above definitions into consideration, the present study defines CSs as any verbal attempts of non-native English speakers to convey their meanings across in solving a communication difficulty or to negotiate their meanings with their interlocutors in reaching a communicative goal.

3.6 Rationale for the Taxonomy for the Present Study

The literature review shows that there are many kinds of CSs taxonomies, most of which are rather similar (for more taxonomies of CSs, See Paribakht, 1982 and Poulisse, 1987). Since the present study aims to cover intra-individual view of CSs (conveying meaning) as well as inter-individual view of CSs (requiring the listener to be involved in the conversation), there is a difficulty in depending on only one taxonomy from the literature. In the previous chapter (Section 2.5), three taxonomies, thought to be representatives of the types of taxonomies in the literature are evaluated and an explanation is provided about why there is a need to make some adjustments to suit the purposes of the present study. The research combines the three taxonomies, eliminating redundancies, choosing a single set of terms that are most useful to the present study.

Although Tarone is considered one of proponents of inter-individual CSs, her taxonomy seems not strongly inter-individual because most of the CSs in it do not

necessarily engage an interlocutor's support for resolution. Færch and Kasper place emphasis on the underlying cognitive process occurring in individual mind, even if they give a space for cooperative strategies. However, both of their works exert strong influence on later researchers in CSs field. The first taxonomy, proposed by Tarone (1983), covers three general kinds of CSs: paraphrase, borrowing and avoidance, under which there are much more detailed CSs. The second taxonomy, proposed by Faerch and Kasper (1984) includes two main categories of strategies, namely, achievement and reduction, which makes use of different levels of CSs generalizations. The two taxonomies focus more on the problems that learners may encounter while trying to convey meaning to their interlocutors and on the strategies they use to solve them. Examples of intra-individual strategies are message abandonment, paraphrase, restructuring and L1-based strategies. These intra-individual strategies are useful because they provide simple and clear definition for the strategies they include.

The third taxonomy, proposed by Williams et al. (1997), classifies CSs into confirmation checks, clarification requests, comprehension checks, etc. This taxonomy is also adopted in the present study because it includes some inter-individual CSs and can be employed in more authentic situations. This taxonomy focuses more on interactions and negotiation of meanings between interlocutors, where problems between interlocutors occur and they need to reach understanding with each other.

The following table can give a summary of the three taxonomies in order to make a clear comparison between them. A tick is put in the taxonomy which includes this type of strategy.

Table 3.3: Summary of the Three Taxonomies

CSs	Taxonomy 1	Taxonomy 2	Taxonomy 3
1. Paraphrase	√	√	
2. Approximation	√	√	
3. Word coinage	√	√	
4. Circumlocution	√		
5. Literal translation	√	√	
6. Code switching	√	√	
7. Appeal for assistance	√	√	√
8. Topic avoidance	√	√	
9. Message abandonment	√		
10. Interlingual transfer		√	
11. Intralingual transfer		√	
12. Generalization		√	
13. Restructuring		√	
14. Non-linguistic	√	√	
15. Waiting		√	
16. Using semantic field		√	
17. Code-based confirmation checks			√
18. Positive confirmation checks			√
19. Neutral confirmation checks			√
20. Clarification requests	√		√
21. Comprehension checks			√
22. Self-reformulations			√
23. Other reformulations			√
24. Repetition			√

Included in the taxonomy for the present study are the CSs from the three taxonomies, based on intra-individual and inter-individual views seeing CSs. The researcher needs to drop some of CSs and add some to the adapted taxonomy in order to serve the purposes of the present study.

There is an overlap of a few CSs among the three taxonomies, particularly in the first two. As an example, the CS "appeal for assistance" in the first two taxonomies is also called "clarification requests" in the third one. The present study only includes "clarification requests" because they have almost the same meaning. Another example is that the CS "paraphrase" in the first two taxonomies has almost the same meaning with "self-reformulation" in the third. "Circumlocution" is excluded in the study because it has more or less the same meaning as "paraphrase" and it is not necessary to include both of them in the taxonomy. Paraphrase is often seen as the most important achievement strategy, and most of the existing taxonomies focus on it. As a result, "paraphrase" will be used instead of "self-reformulation" and "circumlocution" in the present taxonomy. As for "interlingual and intralingual transfers", the researcher eliminates them by considering that the two CSs are related to L1 and has something similar to "code switching" or "language switch", which is included under L1-based CSs in the study. "Non-linguistic" and "waiting" are not included on the basis that the two CSs are non-verbal and out of the scope of the study. "Using semantic field" is regarded by the researcher to have almost the same meaning with "generalization" and is eliminated from the present taxonomy. "Neutral confirmation checks" is excluded because it is the same as "positive confirmation". Redundancies were thus eliminated in this way after the researcher examined closely all the CSs among the three taxonomies. However, two CSs "meaning replacement" and "foreignizing" (in the taxonomy of Willems 1987) are added into the taxonomy due to the fact that they belong to avoidance and L1-based CSs respectively which the researcher feels interested in examining to get a more complete understanding of CSs.

3.7 Taxonomy for the Present Study

As mentioned in section 2.5, the kinds of taxonomies that cannot cover CSs from both intra-individual and inter-individual perspectives are not appropriate for the present study. Because the present study investigates both intra-individual and inter-individual CSs, the three taxonomies need to be combined. However, it should be noted that some CSs could emerge under different categories of the three taxonomies because of their communicative contexts. The following is the taxonomy adapted for the present study.

Taxonomy of CSs from both Intra-individual and Inter-individual Perspectives

I.   **CSs from the intra-individual perspective:** Those strategies are mainly produced by one interlocutor (speaker) to convey meaning to the listener.

1. **Avoidance**: Learners do not talk about things which they know are difficult in the second language.

a. *Topic avoidance*: The learner simply tries not to talk about concepts for which the TL item is not known.

b. *Message abandonment*: The learner begins to talk about a concept but is unable to continue and stops in mid-utterance.

c. *Meaning replacement*: The learner preserves the "topic" but refers to it by means of a more general expression.

2. **IL-based strategies**: The learner makes use of IL other than the L2.

a. *Generalization*: The learner solves problems with IL items which they would not normally use in such contexts. The learner assumes that his

original goal can be reached by using a generalized IL item. As an instance of generalization the leaner uses the superordinate term "animals" to refer to her "rabbit".

b. *Paraphrase*: The learner solves problems with a construction which is well-formed according to his IL system. The learner focuses on characteristic properties or functions of the intended referent. An example is when the learner describes "interest' as "have some more money".

c. *Word coinage*: A word coinage strategy involves the learner in a creative construction of a new IL word. Varadi's (1983) example of "airball" for "balloon" can explain this strategy.

d. *Restructuring*: Whenever the learner realizes that he cannot complete a plan, he develops an alternative plan which enables him to communicate his intended message without reduction. There is one example in which the learner wants to express that he is hungry, he says "I must eat something". In this way, the learner restructures his utterance.

e. *Approximation*: The learner uses an item known to be incorrect but which shares some semantic features in common with the correct one. Say "fish" for "carp", because the listener will be able to deduce from the context what is intended.

3. Transfer by using L1-based strategies:

a. *Literal translation*: One example of literal translation is a Mandarin speaker who produced "He lost his way" instead of "He got lost."

b. *Language switch*: It is the straightforward insertion of words from another language, usually L1-based words into learners' IL utterances.

    c. Foreignizing: Some target-language modification is applied to the L1 term. For example, the English word *pressure* is pronounced with a French accent to create a possible French word instead of the correct French word *pression*.

II. **CSs from inter-individual perspective:** These strategies need interaction between two interlocutors to achieve comprehension or they depend on what is previously said.

    1. Confirmation checks: These are utterances that seek to confirm that the material in an interlocutor's previous utterance has been heard or understood. The listener is provided most of the information to respond to or to confirm. The typical responses for these checks are yes/no as a single word utterance or followed by more information. There are two different subcategories of confirmation checks:

    a. *Code-based confirmation checks*: repeating the same or part of the previous linguistic utterance for confirmation.

    Example: S: …Also I have the same problem in the vocabulary.

        T: In vocabulary?

        S: Yes.

    b. *Positive confirmation checks*: The speaker offers the listener information and implies that s/he expects confirmation of it.

    Example: You said we have answered there in the book, *right*?

    2. Clarification requests: These are utterances made by listeners when they fail to understand. Unlike confirmation checks, clarification requests do not present the listener with information to respond to. Example: What do you mean? Or sorry, I didn't understand.

3. Comprehension checks: These are utterances made by the speaker and they attempt to confirm that the listener has understood what the speaker has said.

Example: Understand? Or do you know what I mean?

4. Other reformulations: The listener reformulates or models the previous speaker's utterance.

Example: Can you tell me what *do* you want to buy?

What I want to buy is that….

5. Repetitions: These are exact duplications of what has been uttered.

Table 3.4: CSs in the Taxonomy for the Present Study

	Intra-individual CSs	**Notes**
C1	**Topic avoidance (TA):** not to talk about the concept	**Avoidance**
C2	**Message abandonment (MA):** to stop in mid-utterance	
C3	**Meaning replacement (MR):** to use another expression	
C4	**Generalization (Gen):** to use a generalized IL item	**IL-based CSs**
C5	**Paraphrase (Par):** to focus on characteristic properties of the intended referent	
C6	**Word coinage (WC):** to create a new IL word	
C7	**Restructuring (Res):** to restructure one's utterance	
C8	**Approximation (App):** to use an item incorrectly but sharing some semantic features	
C9	**Literal translation (LT):** to translate literally	**Transfer by using L1-based strategies**
C10	**Language switch (LS):** to insert words from native language	
C11	**Foreignizing (For):** to apply TL modification to the L1 term	
	Inter-individual CSs	**Notes**
C12	**Code-based confirmation check (CCC):** to repeat the previous utterance for confirmation	**IL Negotiation**
C13	**Positive confirmation check (PCC):** to offer information for confirmation	
C14	**Clarification request (CR):** to ask for clarification	
C15	**Comprehension check (CC):** to attempt to check comprehension	
C16	**Other reformulation (OR):** to model the speaker's previous utterance	
C17	**Repetition (Rep):** to duplicate the exact utterance	

3.8 Data Analyses

The data from the questionnaire, speaking test and frequency form transferred from the speaking data output were entered into the computer and processed by SPSS for quantitative analysis. In contrast, the data drawn from the speaking transcriptions and semi-structured interview were submitted to qualitative analysis.

3.8.1 Pearson Correlation

The Pearson correlation coefficient between NSMT and CET-SET was obtained from Bivariate correlations of SPSS to see if the two types of test are correlated with each other positively or negatively.

3.8.2 Frequency and Percentage

Frequency and percentages were used to know the extent to which different types of CSs were used. Factors such as L2 proficiency, task type, academic field and gender were also examined to see whether they affect the CSs use, and their relationship with learners' choice of CSs.

3.8.3 t-tests and ANOVA

Independent t-tests were used to examine whether there are significant differences in the success of subjects' performance between task one and task two, HP and LP, Arts and Science, as well as male and female. The null hypothesis is that there is no significant difference between the variables, and then according to the result of value coming from SPSS, the null hypothesis is accepted or rejected ($p < 0.05$). If the null hypothesis is accepted, it means there is no significant difference between them. If the null hypothesis is rejected, it means there is a significant difference between them.

ANOVA could be applied to find any significant difference between the success and all the 17 CSs. The null hypothesis is that there is no significant difference between them, and then according to the result of value coming from SPSS, the null hypothesis is accepted or rejected ($p < 0.05$). If the null hypothesis is accepted, it means there is no significant difference between them. If the null hypothesis is rejected, it means there is a significant difference between them.

3.8.4 Chi-Square X^2

Chi-Square X^2 tests in the present study was used to compare the frequencies between the levels of the four variables, namely, task, proficiency, field and gender, when the subjects are employing CSs. The association between the four variables was also examined by Chi-Square X^2.

The results of Chi-square can show if there is a statistically significant association between CSs use and learners' L2 proficiency, task, field and gender. The null hypothesis is that there is no significant association between them. According to results from SPSS, the null hypothesis is accepted or rejected ($p < 0.05$). If the null hypothesis is accepted, it means there is no significant association between them. If the null hypothesis is rejected, it means there is a significant association between them.

3.8.5 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a standard methodology in the social sciences for studying the content of communication. The method of *content analysis* enables the researcher to include large amounts of textual information and systematically identify its properties, e.g. the frequencies of most used keywords by detecting the more important structures of its communication content. According to Krippendorff (2004),

content analysis has to address prior questions concerning why available texts came into being, what they mean and to whom, how they mediate between antecedent and consequent condition, and, ultimately, whether they enable the analysts to select valid answers to questions concerning their contexts.

A further step in analysis is the distinction between quantitative approaches and qualitative approaches. Quantitative approaches set up a list of categories derived from the frequency list of words and control the distribution of words and their respective categories over the texts. While methods in quantitative content analysis in this way transform observations of found categories into quantitative statistical data, the qualitative content analysis focuses more on the intentionality and its implications.

To conduct a content analysis on any text, the text is coded, or broken down, into manageable categories on a variety of levels--word, word sense, phrase, sentence, or theme--and then examined using one of content analysis' basic methods: conceptual analysis or relational analysis. In conceptual analysis, a concept is chosen for examination, and the analysis involves quantifying and tallying its presence. Relational analysis, like conceptual analysis, begins with the act of identifying concepts present in a given text or set of texts. However, relational analysis seeks to go beyond presence by exploring the relationships between the concepts identified. In other words, the focus of relational analysis is to look for semantic, or meaningful, relationships.

As for the coding system (See Appendix 6), the process of coding is a major stage of qualitative data analysis. Coding is defined as marking the segments of data with symbols, descriptive words, or category names. The researcher here

carefully read the transcribed data, line by line, and divided the data into meaningful analytical units (i.e., segmenting the data). When the researcher located meaningful segments, she coded them.

Whenever the researcher found a meaningful segment of text in a transcript, she assigned a code or category name to signify that particular segment, and continued this process until she segmented all of the data and completed the initial coding.

3.9 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted by following the procedures stated in the methodology part before it was revised. It was carried out at Guizhou University for six weeks from October to November 2007. This section discusses how the pilot study was conducted and its implications for the main study.

3.9.1 Purpose of the Pilot Study

Following are some important and specific reasons for conducting the pilot study.

1. To try out the instruments including the questionnaire, English speaking test and semi-structured interview.

2. To have a better idea about the speaking tasks performed by the students.

3. To make sure that the corpus coming out from students' activity can provide related data for the main study.

4. To investigate the effect of the audio recording while students are carrying out their tasks.

5. To have a better estimate about the length of the task time.

6. To make sure that the instructions given to the subjects are clear.

7. To find out what kinds of difficulties may arise from the procedures of data collection in the pilot study.

8. To avoid any problems, as much as possible, that may be revealed by the pilot study when conducting the main study.

3.9.2 Administration of Questionnaire

At the beginning of the semester, the researcher chose two classes for the pilot study. One of the classes from the Arts of College major in Tourism and the other from the Science of College major in Optics Information. Totally 60 students in the two classes participated in the pilot study.

The questionnaire in English version was examined by two of my colleagues in Foreign Language Department. After that, according to their reasonable suggestions some changes were made including the structure and content. The Chinese version of the questionnaire was also checked by the other two colleagues whose advice on the translation was also accepted.

Then the completed questionnaire was administered to all the students so as to elicit background information and behavioral questions about CSs. After students completed the first part of the questionnaire including such background information as major and English score of NSMT (See Chapter 3.4.1), they moved on to the next part of behavioral questions about CSs. In this part, students were required to choose from 5 responses of five-point Likert scale.

According to students' English score of NSMT, in each class ten students were originally decided to belong to high proficiency level, another ten belonging to low proficiency level. The top ten students were chosen because in this way there was

a clear cut between the high and low proficiency level. And the two levels represent the developing stages of students' IL system.

3.9.3 Determination of Proficiency Levels

The present study investigates IL CSs in spoken English. As a comprehensive test, NSMT excludes the speaking test and is not sufficient as the only tool to decide students' proficiency level. Therefore, CET-SET (Band 4) was given to 40 students chosen from two classes, so as to determine students' proficiency level (for CET-SET, See Appendix 2). This spoken English test was standardized because it is the original test in the year of 2005. The researcher and one colleague discussed the grading criterion in advance and made agreement with each other. While testing students, an agreement could be achieved to decide students' grades.

3.9.4 Distribution of Speaking Tasks

After high and low proficiency groups were finally decided on, two types of task were assigned to them (See Section 3.3.1). Students were asked to perform the tasks individually and in pairs within a certain amount of time.

As for the individual task, students were given eight abstract topics to choose from and were required to report one topic in three minutes. As for the pair task, students did a shop service role-play adapted from the website www.teachingenglish.org.uk. Each pair of students was offered role-play cards, acting as shop assistant and customer (option 1 and 2) separately. During 8 minutes each pair of them completed the role play.

There are some problems which emerged from the speaking tasks. Firstly, the researcher distributed the tasks to subjects a week before the performance, because the researcher meets the subjects once a week. However, one week seems to

be longer and students prepared these tasks well so that the communication difficulties didn't meet the researcher's expectation. Secondly, those eight abstract topics seemed to have different difficulty level, because most of the students chose "friendship", "pollution" and "peace" while few chose "generosity", "destiny" and "persistence". Thirdly, if the researcher allowed students to keep the role play cards, they tended to read those sentences appearing in role-play cards while carrying out the task.

Therefore, in the main study all of the topics given to subjects have been checked by two English native speakers and two Chinese professors to ensure that they are universal and have the same semantic meanings for both native speakers and Chinese EFL learners and that each topic has the same difficulty level. The preparation time for the tasks should be considered closely. Some items need to be provided for students in the exam room to stop them looking at the cards.

The whole process of students' performing the two kinds of task was recorded and contributed to a six hour recording.

3.9.5 Conducting of Semi-structured Interview

At the end of the pilot study, a semi-structured interview was conducted in Chinese to ask students about their perception of CSs. There are altogether six questions used to elicit students' information about some specific aspects (See Appendix 5). The interview was also recorded.

3.9.6 Results of the Pilot Study

Data analysis was conducted through quantitative and qualitative methods. The following is the way in which the collected data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

All the choices of the students were put into computer and run by SPSS. Few students asked any questions about the questionnaire in terms of structure and content. The results show that it the questionnaire can be adapted into the main study with minor changes.

18 out of 40 students think question item6 always true of them, which can be also seen from the percentage value 45%. It shows that much more learners choose to give examples when meeting an unknown word.

Much more students think the following question items generally true of them, such as item1, item3, item5, item10, item15 and item16. Respectively their frequency values and percentage values are 13 (32.5%), 14 (35%), 17 (42.5%), 19 (47.5%), 21 (52.5%) and 12 (30%). It shows that more learners use CSs such as topic avoidance, meaning replacement, paraphrase, repetition and reformulation.

Much more students think the following question items somewhat true of them, such as item9, item12 and item13. Respectively their frequency values and percentage values are 13 (32.5%), 20 (50%) and 13 (32.5%). For item 12, there are equally 13 out of 40 students think it generally not true of them. The results suggest that more learners believe the CSs like approximation, L1-based and appeal for assistance can help them to a certain degree.

Much more students think the following question items generally not true of them, such as item2, item7, item8, item11 and item14. Respectively their frequency values and percentage values are 17 (42.5%), 16 (40%), 12 (30%), 20 (50%) and 15 (37.5%). The results show that more learners do not tend to use such CSs as message abandonment, coinage, restructuring, literal translation, non-verbal appeal for assistance.

16 out of 40 students think item4 never true of them, which can be also shown by the percentage value 40%. It suggests that less learners use the CS of generalization. In other words, all of the learners employ those CSs provided in the taxonomy adapted for the present study, because the questionnaire is constructed closely according to this taxonomy. Comparing these CSs in the questionnaire, some CSs are used more frequently than the others.

As it was mentioned previously, data from speaking tasks could not fully reflect the CSs in the taxonomy of the present study. One reason for this is the much longer time given to students for preparation, so there seemed few communication problems for them to solve. Another reason is that the topics for students to choose from are not in equal difficulty, and then students prefer those easier topics such as friendship, love and pollution, which may not be very useful to elicit more CSs.

Even so, from the spoken corpus there still appeared a number of CSs. The following coding system is what the researcher did in the pilot study to test the adapted taxonomy in terms of proficiency, field and task (here HP refers to high proficiency and LP refers to low proficiency).

CSs from Intra-individual View

C1: Topic avoidance

Ex. 1 (from LP Arts student in describing *friendship*)

…Friends can have… have similar ideas, but many people …don't know how to make friends…. <Then after a long pause, she gives up>

Ex. 2 (from LP Science student in describing *friendship*)

…Friendship is just like *brothership*…you should treat your friends like your brother…. Can I talk about my father?

C2: Message abandonment

Ex. 1 (from LP Arts student in describing *friendship*)

…I think we love each other…I'm happy because I have a friend like her.

Ex. 2 (from LP Science students describing *environment)*

…We should protect our environment …not damage it…. Sorry, I don't know what I want to say.

C3: Meaning replacement

Ex. 1 (from HP Science student in describing environment)

…As an individual, we should…we should limit…. We should be aware of this situation.

C5: Paraphrase

Ex. 1 (from LP Arts student in doing *role play*)

A: When did you buy it…*buy these goods*?

B: About last week.

C7: Restructuring

Ex. 1 (from HP Science student in doing *role play*)

…I want to try…to say about myself. It happened in my dormitory…One day when….

< Here the student tells a story about friendship instead of going with his previous description >

C10: Language switch

Ex.1 (from LP Science student in describing *peace*)

…If we can put…put…if we can't *tingzhi* (*stop* in Chinese) the damage.

Ex. 2 (from LP Science student in describing *friendship*)

Friends in need are friends indeed. Friends should be like *"youfu gongxiang, younan tongdang"* (*sharing happiness and sadness together* in Chinese)

CSs from Inter-individual View

C13: Code-based confirmation checks

Ex.1 (from HP Arts student in doing role play)

A: I promise you will be satisfied with the T-shirt size.

B: *T-shirt size*?

C14: Positive confirmation checks

Ex. 1 (from LP Arts student in doing role play)

A: …Do you agree?

B: But I want my money back, *OK*?

C15: Clarification requests

Ex.1 (from LP Science student in doing role play)

A: *What do you mean? I can't understand.*

C16: Comprehension checks

Ex.1 (from HP Arts student in doing role play)

A: You needn't pay more money, of course.

B: *Really?* Is this as good as you said?

C17: Other reformulations

Ex.1 (from HP Arts student in doing role play)

A: Can you tell me what did you buy?

B: *What I bought* is a T-shirt and…a camera.

C18: Repetitions

Ex.1 (from LP Arts student in describing *marriage*)

…I must be…*must be* …bear more responsibilities…

Ex. 2 (from LP Science student in describing *friendship*)

…Friends are like… *are like*…brothers.

3.9.7 Implications for the Main Study

Therefore, from the above coding of the transcribed data, concentrating on CSs elicited from tasks, the implications of the pilot study for the main study could be reported as follows:

1. When students were required to describe the topics, they occasionally stopped in the middle utterances and did not know what to say next. If students were put in a situation where a native speaker in front of them was trying to figure out what they are saying, they would attempt to keep saying instead of in silence. Therefore, in the main study concept identification task would be adopted instead.

2. Because the researcher distributed much more time to students preparing for the tasks, it seems that they tended to recite what they had prepared. When they couldn't go on, they tried to recall their preparation subconsciously, but not to make use of much more CSs to solve the difficulties.

3. Even so, it was indeed found that students employed most CSs in the adapted taxonomy except generalization, approximation and foreignizing, which the main study would pay more attention to.

4. It seems that low proficiency students use more avoidance CSs, L1-based CSs and mime than high proficiency students do.

5. The two-way task elicited much more inter-individual CSs than the one-way task. However, it was also found that intra-individual CSs emerge in the two-way task. In the main study, this would be further examined.

6. The researcher herself categorized the CSs elicited from the speaking tasks in the pilot study. But it doesn't mean that all the CSs will be analyzed this way in the main study. The main study will certainly consider closely the inter-rater reliability by involving native speakers and the researcher's colleagues into the categorization and success of CSs.

3.10 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments in the Main Study

In order to get the result of different types of CSs employed by Chinese EFL learners, the researcher and two colleagues looked at the transcription of learners' performance on two types of task and worked together to identify and classify different CSs. The other two colleagues' research field is language teaching and learning. Even so, they are new to the field of CSs and to the taxonomy adapted for the present study. The researcher needed to meet them and discussed with them about what CSs to be investigated in this study. For the first week, the researcher identified and classified the CSs together with the two raters in order to train them to familiarize with the CSs in the taxonomy and achieved inter-rater reliability. Once the two raters got familiar with the identification and classification of different CSs, they and the researcher worked independently on the next transcription. Then we needed to meet again and discuss further.

The researcher prepared a sort of checklist that includes several columns generally as follows:

Table 3.5: Checklist of CSs among Inter Raters

Transcription Line	CSs used	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
1				
2				
3				

The researcher as rater 1 identified and classified the types of CSs independently while the other two colleagues as raters 2 and 3 also worked individually. Then we put our checklists together to decide on CSs. If there was any disagreement between the researcher and the two raters, we sat down and discussed. It should be noted that our discussion was not only to solve our disagreement but also to understand why the raters classified the CSs that way before making any decision on how to best classify CSs. The results should reach at least 75 % agreement between the researcher and the raters so that a high inter-rater reliability could be achieved.

In the task of concept identification two native speakers examined one high proficiency student and one low proficiency student respectively. They need to identify the concept and at the same time rank the success of CSs used to convey concepts, according to the criterion provided in section 3.4.3. After that, they crosschecked the success of these employed CSs. The inter-rater reliability must be achieved.

In the task of role play, students were required to act as, say, shop assistance and customer. After the researcher recorded students' performance output and classified different types of CSs with two other raters, two native speakers were asked to listen to the output and read the transcriptions. Thus by cross-checking their decisions and achieving inter-rater reliability, the two native speakers could decide the

success of these CSs depending on the criterion provided in section 3.4.3.

The item objective congruence (IOC) was used to decide the content validity of the questionnaire. Three specialists were asked to evaluate both the content and the language of the questionnaire by scoring +1 for appropriateness, 0 for uncertain appropriateness and -1 for inappropriateness. The results are presented in Table 4.6 as follows.

Table 3.6: Specialists' Check of the Item Objective Congruence Values (IOC)

Identifying Content Validity of the Questionnaire								
Items of CSs	Contents			IOC Value	Language			IOC Value
	+1	0	−1		+1	0	−1	
1	2	1	-	0.67	3	-	-	1.0
2	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
3	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
4	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
5	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
6	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
7	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
8	3	-	-	1.0	2	1	-	0.67
9	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
10	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
11	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
12	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
13	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
14	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
15	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
16	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
17	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0
18	3	-	-	1.0	3	-	-	1.0

For one thing, the contents of the questionnaire were found appropriate and acceptable (the IOC values were between 0.67 and 1.0), which means that most of the specialists' opinions were higher than 0.67. For another, the languages of the questionnaire were also found appropriate and acceptable (the IOC values were

between 0.67 and 1.0), which means that most of the specialists' opinions were higher than 0.67. In conclusion, the questionnaire could serve the researcher's purpose of investigating learners' behaviors of those CSs use.

3.11 Summary

The pilot study, on the whole, proved that the research methodology provided in chapter three was feasible. The subjects chosen for the research were appropriate for the main study from perspectives of proficiency and major. The instruments, such as questionnaire, speaking task and semi-structured interview were tried out and found that they could be adopted in the main study with some careful modifications. Taking speaking task as an example, in the main study there should be a time limitation for subjects to prepare for the tasks before their performance. Otherwise, there would be less communication problems and communication strategies.

This chapter mainly illustrates the research design for the present study that includes quantitative and qualitative methods together. Subjects in the study are first year students in four classes from Arts and Science majors. Their English proficiency is decided by NSMT and CET-SET. Based on the literature, two types of task are used to elicit CSs from those subjects. To triangulate the data, questionnaire and semi-structured interview are also conducted in the study. In one hand, data are processed through SPSS and analyzed quantitatively. On the other hand, qualitative method is also used to analyze the spoken corpus.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter is to present the results of the study in response to the four research questions in Chapter One. The quantitative analysis deals with the data from the questionnaire and the speaking frequency form by using statistical methods. On the other hand, the qualitative analysis seeks out the CSs used by the subjects in the speaking tasks as well as subjects' attitudes and behaviors elicited from the semi-structured interview.

4.1 Introduction

The first question was intended to determine the types of CSs employed by Chinese EFL learners. The second question aimed at finding out the effects of four variables (proficiency, task, field and gender) on types of CSs used. Here, those EFL learners' proficiency level was decided by their NSMT and CET-SET score. The task type means one-way task and two-way task. And those learners come from two fields --- Arts and Science. The third question attempted to detect the effects of the four variables on the four categories of CSs used. The fourth question investigated how successful these used CSs are, and also investigated the effects of the four variables on the success of these CSs used.

The subjects of the study originally included 120 students from Arts and Science. However, on the days when the main study was conducted, three students were absent.

Students were of two proficiency levels, high and low. The high proficiency group and the low proficiency group had 60 and 57 students respectively. Table 4.1 shows the subjects of the study in the speaking tasks. All the subjects were treated with two types of task including concept identification and role play. Each of the following sections deals with the four research questions in turn based on the results found in the study along with the statistical techniques used for the analyses.

Table 4.1: Subjects of the Study

Variable	Subcategory	Number	Total
Gender	Male	61	117
	Female	56	
Field	Science	57	117
	Arts	60	
Proficiency	High	60	117
	Low	57	

4.2 Correlations between the Variables from Demographic Information

Before the subjects were treated with two speaking tasks, they had been asked to answer a demographic questionnaire (Part A of the questionnaire in Appendix 1) which attempted to elicit their background information such as the subjects' gender, academic field and NMST English score.

In the present study, subjects' proficiency was decided both by their NSMT English score, gained from the background information questionnaire, and by their English speaking test score, obtained from CET-SET. It was therefore needed to check the correlation between subjects' NSMT score and CET-SET through Bivairate of correlate in SPSS. Table 4.2 presents all the results.

Table 4.2: Pearson Correlations between the Two Variables

	NMST	CET-SET
NMST	1	.579**
CET-SET	.579**	1

$*p \leq .05 \ **p \leq .01$

In Table 4.2, the Pearson correlation coefficient between NSMT and CET-SET was 0.579 at $p = 0.00 < 0.05$, which means that there was a significant correlation between NSMT score and CET-SET score. Both of them therefore could be used to decide the subjects' proficiency level. If we take the correlation coefficient a step further by squaring it, the value R^2 $(.579)^2 = .335$ tells us that CET-SET scores accounts for 33.5% of variation in learners' NSMT.

4.3 Findings for Research Question One

What are the different types of CSs employed by Chinese EFL learners?

By participating in the two types of task (concept identification and role play), all subjects were found to employ CSs in the data analysis to different degrees. Frequency statistics (frequencies and percentages) through SPSS were adopted to examine each of CSs in order to answer this research question. Table 4.3 summarizes all the results of the output from the frequency.

Table 4.3: Frequencies and Percentages of Overall CSs Employed by the Subjects

Group	CSs	Number of subjects	Frequency		Percentage %	
			Yes	No	Yes	No
Avoidance	T Avoidance	117	15	219	6.4	93.6
	M Abandonment	117	58	176	24.8	75.2
	M Replacement	117	6	228	2.6	97.4
IL-based CSs	Generalization	117	63	171	26.9	73.1
	Paraphrase	117	99	135	42.3	57.7
	Word Coinage	117	3	231	1.3	98.7
	Restructuring	117	83	151	35.5	64.5
	Approximation	117	40	194	17.1	82.9
L1-based CSs	L Translation	117	27	207	11.5	88.5
	L Switch	117	19	215	8.1	91.9
	Foreignizing	117	1	233	0.4	99.6
IL Negotiation	C C Check	117	32	202	13.7	86.3
	P C Check	117	41	193	17.5	82.5
	C Request	117	68	166	29.1	70.9
	C Check	117	17	217	7.3	92.7
	O Reformulation	117	4	230	1.7	98.3
	Repetition	117	76	158	32.5	67.5

Note: Although the number of subject is 117, each subject was treated twice for two types of task.

Based on the frequencies and percentages given in Table 4.3, the most frequently used CSs in this study were *paraphrase* (99, 42.3%), *restructuring* (83, 35.5%), *repetition* (76, 32.5%), *clarification request* (68, 29.1%), *generalization* (63, 26.9%) and *message abandonment* (58, 24.8%). Table 4.3 also shows that the least commonly used CSs in this study were *comprehension check* (17, 7.3%), *topic*

avoidance (15, 6.4%), *meaning replacement* (6, 2.6%), *other reformulation* (4, 1.7%), *word coinage* (3, 1.3%) and *foreignizing* (1, 0.4%). Obviously, *paraphrase* was by far the most frequently used strategy in the present study, which means that learners resorted to this strategy more commonly than any others in the taxonomy. In contrast, *foreignizing* was then the far least frequently used strategy in the present study, which indicates that learners resorted to this strategy least commonly than any others in the taxonomy.

It was found that the different nature between the two types of task led to the variation of CSs adoption. Table 4.4 shows this result on frequencies and percentages of CSs use in the two tasks. In the "concept identification" task, *paraphrase* (98, 84%), *generalization* (63, 54%), *repetition* (58, 50%) and *restructuring* (54, 46%) were most frequently employed by all the subjects. However, the least often used CSs in the same task were *foreignzing* (0, 0%), *positive confirmation check* (0, 0%) and *other reformulation* (0, 0%). In the "role play" task, *clarification request* (67, 57%), *positive confirmation check* (41, 35%), *code-based confirmation check* (31, 26%) and *restructuring* (29, 25%) were the most commonly occurring ones. However, the least commonly occurring CSs were those of *meaning replacement* (0, 0%), *generalization* (0, 0%) and *foreignizing* (1, 1%).

Table 4.4: Frequencies and *p* Values of CSs Employed by the Subjects in Two Tasks

Group	CSs	Frequency				Percentage %		Chi-square *p* value
		CI (n=117)		RP (n=117)		CI (CS use)	RP (CS use)	
		Yes	No	Yes	No			
Avoidance	T Avoidance	8	109	7	110	7	6	.790
	M Abandonment	46	71	12	105	39	10	.000**
	M Replacement	6	111	0	117	5	0	.013*
IL-based CSs	Generalization	63	54	0	117	54	0	.000**
	Paraphrase	98	19	1	116	84	1	.000**
	Word Coinage	1	116	2	115	1	2	.561
	Restructuring	54	63	29	88	46	25	.001**
	Approximation	27	90	13	104	23	11	.015*
L1-based CSs	L Translation	7	110	20	97	6	17	.008**
	L Switch	14	103	5	112	11	4	.031*
	Foreignizing	0	117	1	116	0	1	.316
IL Negotiation	C C Check	1	116	31	86	1	26	.000**
	P C Check	0	117	41	76	0	35	.000**
	C Request	1	116	67	50	1	57	.000**
	C Check	12	105	5	112	10	4	.078*
	O Reformulation	0	117	4	113	0	3	.044*
	Repetition	58	59	18	99	50	15	.000**

*p ≤ .05 **p ≤ .01

Chi-square tests were conducted for the relationship between CSs use and task in order to determine whether there are significant differences between CSs use in the two tasks. The *p*-values in Table 4.4 show that most of the differences are significant in CSs between concept identification and role play. However, five strategies did not show any significant difference (*topic avoidance* at *p* = .790 > .05, *word-coinage* at *p* = .561 > .05, *foreignizing* at *p* = .316 > .05 and *comprehension*

check at p = .078 > .05). Therefore, it could be said that there were significant differences between most of the strategies (including *message abandonment, meaning replacement, generalization, paraphrase, restructuring, approximation, literal translation, language switch, code-based confirmation checks, positive confirmation check, clarification request, other reformulation* and *repetition*, all their *p*-values less than 0.05) employed by the subjects in concept identification task and role play task. This means that the subjects made use of these CSs very differently in the two tasks. As for the other five strategies there was no significant difference between them in both tasks, which means that the subjects did not use the five CSs very differently in the two tasks.

In the concept identification task, *paraphrase* was the strategy the subjects most commonly resorted to first, when they described those words given. Some examples are as follows:

(1) A subject (S28) described the word "kite" by saying "**The first word is that you hold it by your long string … um and make it fly in the sky**".
   (LP, Arts and Female)

(2) A subject (S16) described "bravery" by saying "**when I am .. um .. afraid of something, um it gives me a power to face it, to face the difficulty**".
   (HP, Arts and Female)

(3) A subject (S24) described "keyboard" by saying " **… when we surf the internet, we also make it input some words.**
   (LP, Arts and Female)

(4) A subject (S12) described "garage" by saying " **… it's .. um .. um it's a store house for many (many) cars and another meaning it's .. um .. a workshop for ….**"   (HP, Arts and Female)

(5) A subject (S13) described "confidence" by saying "**Um … the feeling that you are sure about your own abilities**."   (LP, Arts and Male)

(6) A subject (S31) described the word "curtain" by saying "**The first is cloth which hang up at the window to prevent the sunshine**."
   (HP, Arts and Female)

(7) A subject (S15) described "fireplace" by saying "**It's a stove in the wall. And many .. um .. western countries have it**."   (LP, Arts and Female)

Generalization was the second most commonly occurring strategy in the concept

identification task. A number of subjects chose to use *generalization*. There were lots of these examples in the following excerpts.

(1) A subject (S3) started to describe "computer" by saying "**Every student can use it. We can use it to know information and we can use it to play games ….**"   (LP, Arts and Male)

(2) A subject (S24) began to describe "monkey" by saying "**Um … the first meaning is um … that it is an animal which um looks like human beings.**"   (HP, Science and Male)

(3) A subject (S11) described "courage" by saying "**If we want to do something, we must have, (have) something. If we have it, it will give us power to do it well.**"   (HP, Science and Male)

(4) A subject (S14) described "loyalty" by saying **"It is important between husband and wife, among friends or even in the army."**
                               (HP, Science and Male)

(5) A subject (S16) described "goose" by saying "**It's like a duck or chicken, but it's not them. It is bigger than that. It can swim on water, er .. the color is white.**"   (HP, Science and Male)

Repetition was the third most commonly adopted strategy in the concept identification. This strategy occurred more frequently in the one-way task than in the two-way task. The following examples can show this strategy.

(1) A subject (S15) repeated "**something .. um used in winter .. in the world**" for three times in order to make the native speaker get the idea of the word "fireplace".   (LP, Arts and Male)

(2) A subject (S17) repeated the key sentence "**babies are fed by fathers**" again and again to refer to "seahorse".   (HP, Arts and Female)

(3) A subject (S21) kept repeating "**If I am now nervous, I should try some way to keep me calm down. I can listen to the music .. such as watch TV .. to keep me calm down.**" by describing "relaxation"
                               (HP, Science and Female)

(4) A subject (S22) repeated "**It's a tool that we can fly … a ball with air .. can fly**" to refer to "balloon".   (LP, Science and Male)

(5) A subject (S15) repeated "**It's a stove in the wall. And many .. um .. western countries have it. ... Many western country families have it, stove in the wall**" to describe "fireplace".   (LP, Arts and Female)

With reference to the role play task, the first most often used strategy was *clarification request* due to the fact that students were supposed to make utterances when they failed to understand. Let's look at the examples including *clarification*

request.

    (1) Customer: I want to get my money back and return the T-shirt.
        S23 as a shop assistant: **What do you mean**? You want what, what do you
        want?   (LP, Science and Male)
    (2) Customer: I bought something from your shop and … now I want to .. return
        them back.
        S13 as a shop assistant: **What do you mean**? What's the problem with them?
                                            (LP, Science, Male)
    (3) Customer: After I went out of your shop last week, I found sth wrong with the
        goods I bought in your shop.
        S27 as a shop assistant: **What happens**?   (LP, Science and Female)

        The second most often used strategy in the role play was *positive confirmation check*. Instances are as follows:

    (1) Customer: This color doesn't suit my brother … and he *dislike* it.
        S9 as a shop assistant: "Your brother didn't like the color, **yes**?"
                                            (LP, Science and Male)
    (2) Customer: When I took the camera back home I .. *some water* ... on it.
        S14 as a shop assistant: You said you got some water on it, **right**?
                                          (HP, Arts and Female)
    (3) Shop assistant: I think … whether I can choose … one for you.
        S20 as a customer: You can choose another one for me, **ok**?
                                          (LP, Arts and Male)
        Code-based confirmation check was the third most occurring strategy in the role play, which is code-based one, shown in the following examples:

    (1) Shop Assistant: We can't give your money back to you, but we can $\lceil$fix it$\rfloor$.
        S6 as a customer: $\lceil$**fix it**$\rfloor$?   (HP, Arts and Male)
    (2) Shop Assistant: According to our rules, I can't give you money back.
        S16 Customer: **Really**?   (LP, Arts and Female)
    (3) Shop assistant: And what time did you buy it?
        S26 as a customer: **Time**? Let me think.   (LP, Science and Male)
    (4) Customer: I didn't like this color, I like the black one.
        S20 as a shop assistant: **Black**?   (HP, Science and Female)

        The reason why the researcher chose to show the six examples here is that they occurred most commonly in the data output. Although it is also important to mention the other CSs, it is unlikely to cover all of them thoroughly here due to the limited space.

After the subjects were treated with the two speaking tasks, they were asked to answer a questionnaire which attempted to elicit their behaviors towards 18 communication strategies constructed from the taxonomy of the present study (See Appendix 1). There were totally 116 respondents involved in the questionnaire, because four students out of 120 subjects in the study were absent on the day when the researcher administered the questionnaire. Table 4.5 shows a profile of all the respondents participating in the questionnaire.

Table 4.5: Subjects Involved in the Questionnaire

Variable	Subcategory	Number	Total
Gender	Male	60	116
	Female	56	
Field	Science	58	116
	Arts	58	
Proficiency	High	59	116
	Low	57	

All respondents were required to tick *yes* or *no* for each strategy based on whether they used it or not. The data were put into SPSS for analysis. Table 4.6 shows the results of the questionnaire. In terms of frequency, 116 respondents were generally reported to employ more or less all of the 18 communication strategies in the questionnaire to solve their communication problems. However, there appear some differences of employing each communication strategy.

Table 4.6: Frequencies and Percentages of Overall CSs Used by the Subjects

CSs	Number of subjects	Frequency		Percentage %	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	116	70	46	60.3	39.7
2	116	55	61	47.4	52.6
3	116	94	22	81	19
4	116	65	51	56	44
5	116	91	25	78.4	21.6
6	116	103	13	88.8	11.2
7	116	33	83	28.4	71.6
8	116	77	39	66.4	33.6
9	116	72	44	62.1	37.9
10	116	83	33	71.6	28.4
11	116	66	50	56.9	43.1
12	116	40	76	34.5	65.5
13	116	85	31	73.3	26.7
14	116	67	49	57.8	42.2
15	116	95	21	81.9	18.1
16	116	84	32	72.4	27.6
17	116	89	27	76.7	23.3
18	116	102	14	87.9	12.1

Considering CS 3, 6, 15 and 18, there are 81%, 88.8%, 81.9% and 87.9% respondents (more than 80%) respectively who choose *Yes* in the questionnaire. It shows that students tend to employ these four CSs most frequently in their communications. CS 3 is *generalization (to use a generalized IL item)* "I preserve the "topic" e.g. of running sports, but refer to it by means of a more general expression."

81% respondents tend to use this strategy. CS 6 is *restructuring (to restructure one's utterance)* "I give examples if the listener does not understand what I am saying." 89% respondents tend to exploit this strategy to deal with their communication problems. CS 15 is *comprehension check (to attempt to check comprehension)* "When I attempt to confirm that the listener has understood what I have said, I use utterances like 'Understand?' or 'Do you know what I mean?'." 82% respondents use this strategy in their communications. CS 18 is *clarification request (to make utterances for clarification)* "When I fail to understand the speaker, I ask him/her 'What do you mean?' or say 'Sorry, I didn't understand'." 88% respondents tend to employ this strategy to cope with their communication difficulties.

With regard to CS 2, 7 and 12, for example, there are 47%, 28% and 34% respondents respectively who choose *Yes* in the questionnaire (fewer than 50%). It means that the respondents tend to choose *No*. CS 2 is *message abandonment (to stop in mid-utterance)* "I begin to talk about a concept, e.g. 'equal opportunity', but unable to continue and stop in mid-utterance." 47% respondents tend to use this strategy to deal with communication problem. CS 7 is *word coinage (to create a new IL word)* "I create a new word, e.g. 'airball' for 'balloon'." 28% respondents tend to use this strategy. CS 12 is *language switch (to insert words from native language)* "When I cannot remember something in English, I use Chinese words instead during my communication." 34% respondents tend to use this strategy.

In order to elicit further and detailed information about EFL learners' interpretation of CSs, particularly some *L1-based* CSs, a semi-structured interview was conducted after the completion of the two tasks and the questionnaire. Twenty four subjects in the semi-structured interview were randomly selected from both Arts

and Science fields. However, among them twelve subjects were in high proficiency level and the other twelve in low proficiency level. Three questions were used to interview all the twenty four subjects in Chinese (See Appendix 5).

Some of the interviewees mentioned that their attempt at paraphrasing words led to decreasing the intentional meanings of these words. The paraphrased meanings were not exactly equal to their original ones. This must be taken into consideration if the *paraphrase* strategy is chosen to teach students in the future.

The interview revealed that during their conversations with interlocutors subjects found that some CSs like *confirmation checks, clarification check, comprehension check and reformulation* were useful for them to keep their conversations going smoothly. Asking for assistance is a sort of CS employed by almost all of the interviewees no matter who their interlocutors are, whether it be their peer students or English native speakers. *Confirmation and comprehension check* are often used to pave the way for learners' communication. These CSs did happen both when a low proficiency learner interacted with a high proficiency learner and when a Chinese student interacted with an English native speaker.

Although the present study excluded non-verbal CSs, when interviewed almost all learners agreed that in face-to-face communication they frequently resorted to non-verbal CSs such as *mime, gesture and eye expression* etc. Non-verbal CSs were often used to support verbal CSs when learners attempted to solve some of their communicative problems. An important function (found in this study) of non-verbal CSs was to signal an appeal to the interlocutor. This finding is in agreement with that of Færch and Kasper (1983). The researcher herself was present on this occasion and made notes about this.

4.4 Findings for Research Question Two

Is there an effect of learner's L2 proficiency, task, academic major or gender on types of CSs employment?

4.4.1 Proficiency Levels

Frequencies and percentages for the different CSs in the two proficiency levels (determined by their NSMT and CET-SET) as well as Chi-square tests were conducted to obtain the results, summarized in Table 4.7. It shows that those high proficiency students employed most frequently *paraphrase* (56 and 47% respectively), *restructuring* (48 and 40% respectively) and *repetition* (45 and 38% respectively) whereas those low proficiency students used *paraphrase* (43 and 38% respectively), *message abandonment* (37 and 32% respectively) and *restructuring* (35 and 31% respectively) most commonly.

Table 4.7: Frequencies and Chi-square Values of CSs Used by HP and LP Levels

Group	CSs	Frequency				Percentage %		Chi-square p value
		HP (n=120)		LP (n=114)		HP (CS use)	LP (CS use)	
		Yes	No	Yes	No			
Avoidance	T Avoidance	1	119	14	100	1	12	.000**
	M Abandonment	21	99	37	77	18	32	.008**
	M Replacement	3	117	3	111	3	3	.949
IL-based CSs	Generalization	39	81	24	90	33	21	.048*
	Paraphrase	56	64	43	71	47	38	.166
	Word Coinage	2	118	1	113	2	1	.592
	Restructuring	48	72	35	79	40	31	.137
	Approximation	27	93	13	101	23	11	.024*

Group	CSs	Frequency				Percentage %		Chi-square p value
		HP (n=120)		LP (n=114)		HP (CS use)	LP (CS use)	
		Yes	No	Yes	No			
L1-based CSs	L Translation	15	105	12	102	13	11	.637
	L Switch	5	115	14	100	4	12	.023*
	Foreignizing	1	119	0	114	1	0	.329
IL Negotiation	C C Check	17	103	15	99	14	13	.822
	P C Check	26	94	15	99	22	13	.087
	C Request	35	85	33	81	29	29	.971
	C Check	12	108	5	109	10	4	.098
	O Reformulation	3	117	1	113	3	1	.338
	Repetition	45	75	31	83	38	27	.092

*p ≤ .05 **p ≤ .01

Both high and low proficiency groups employed *word coinage* (2% and 1% respectively), *topic avoidance* (1%), *other reformulations* (1%), and *foreignizing* (1% and 0% respectively) least frequently.

Chi-square results in Table 4.7 summarized the differences between the high proficiency group and the low proficiency group in employing CSs and whether those differences were significant or not. By examining the results closely, we found that there were significant differences in such strategies as *topic avoidance* ($p = .000 < .05$), *message abandonment* ($p = .008 < .05$), *generalization* ($p = .048 < .05$), *approximation* ($p = .024 < .05$) and *language switch* ($p = .023 < .05$) when they were employed by the high proficiency group and the low proficiency group. As for the rest of the strategies, the data analysis showed no significant differences between high proficiency group and low proficiency group ($p > .05$).

Some examples were further elicited from the data to present the above five

CSs (*topic avoidance, message abandonment, generalization, approximation and language switch*) more clearly, which caused the significant differences between high and low proficiency groups, and were addressed in the following.

As an example of *topic avoidance*, one low proficiency subject from Computer Science completely avoided trying the concrete concept word "seahorse" and another low proficiency subject from Optics Information chose not to talk about the abstract concept word "bravery". More examples of *topic avoidance* are as follows:

(1) A subject (S11) avoided describing the word "freedom" by saying " **… um .. that's all I don't know how to explain**." (LP, Science and Male)

(2) NN: Can you say something else?
S16: **No**.
NN: Ok. Here to the next word. (HP, Science and Male)

(3) A subject (S23) avoided the word "imagination" by saying "**I'm sorry I can't explain the word**." (HP, Science and Male)

As for *message abandonment*, some examples show that in the process of saying the word, some LP subjects could not reach their planned goal and stopped in the middle without any closing words. Instances of *message abandonment* appeared a lot more frequently in the data analysis. Among them are:

(1) A subject (S5) tried to describe "crab" by saying "a**nd um it it … it is .. um .. it me means in river um um and …**", but stopped in the middle explanation. (LP, Science and Male)

(2) A subject (S12) stopped when she tried to explain "peacock" by saying "**I just explain it. That's all**." (LP, Arts and Female)

(3) A subject (S17) stopped when she explained "crocodile" by saying "**It's an animal which live in sea .. but in the land, how .. I can't … how to say it**." (LP, Arts and Female)

(4) A subject (S15) stopped when he said "sensitivity" in the middle utterance "**He will be controlled by his mood easily, yes this word is very difficult. …I don't know how to describe it. It's too difficult for me. Too difficult for ….**" (HP, Arts and Male)

In addition, some HP subjects used *generalization* quite often. For example,

(1) A subject (S25) explained the word "monkey" by starting "**It's an animal….**" (HP, Science and Male)

(2) A subject (S12) described "chimney" by saying "**It's a place or building….**" (HP, Arts and Male)

(3) A subject (S9) explained "mushroom" by saying "**It's a plant and looks like an umbrella….**" (HP, Arts and Female)

Some HP subjects used *approximation* in such examples as:

(1) A subject (S7) wanted to say "the goods are out of the warranty", but he used "**the good is out of date**" to refer to it. (HP, Science and Male)

(2) A subject referred to "greenhouse" by saying **"the second part is near to room"** (HP, Arts and Female)

With regard to *language switch*, the data showed that more LP subjects than HP ones resorted to Chinese for help when they could not continue even in face of English native speakers. Interestingly, it was out of the researcher's expectation that the use of Chinese is not helpful when talking to an English native speaker. *Language switch* is seen in the following examples from one-way task performance data:

(1) A subject (S3) said "**It's a … um … (long pause), it's a 那个单词我忘了 (I forget that word).**" (HP, Science and Female)

(2) A subject (S6) said something like "**猜不出来? (You cannot guess out?) Sorry.**" (LP, Arts and Female)

(3) A subject (S27) uttered "**Um 怎么说呢？(How should I say?)**" (LP, Arts and Male)

In sum, the above five CSs were the ones found to present significant differences between HP subjects and LP subjects. The semi-structured interview suggested that even for most of the high proficiency students, when they tried to speak some complicated structures in English, they still started by thinking in their mother tongue i.e. Chinese and then translated into English. On the other hand, when they expressed some simple and short structures in English, they could make them directly without any translation.

A few high proficiency students sometimes tried to get themselves through

communication difficulties by coining new words. An example was *beautiful fishwoman* which was coined to refer to *mermaid* once while talking with an English native speaker. The correct word *mermaid* was finally provided by the English native speaker. The *word coinage* strategy in this situation could be considered successful. Here, the interview came up with the strategy *word coinage*, but in the previous quantitative analysis there was no particular finding about this strategy.

Low proficiency students reported that generally speaking, they had more pronunciation problems when they tried to express themselves. The failure to communicate with English interlocutors was likely due to their inaccurate pronunciation. In the interview some low proficiency students mentioned that they needed to improve their English pronunciation in order to be understood better.

4.4.2 Academic Majors

Let's now turn to the relationship between CSs use and the variable of academic field. Frequencies and percentages of different CSs employed by the subjects in Arts field and Science field as well as Chi-square tests were conducted to obtain the results, shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 shows that the most frequently occurring CSs found among Science's subjects were *paraphrase* (45, 39%), *clarification request* (41, 36%), *restructuring* (38, 33%), *message abandonment* (34, 30%) and *repetition* (33, 29%) while the most frequently occurring CSs found among Arts' subjects were *paraphrase* (54, 45%), *restructuring* (45, 38%), *repetition* (43, 36%), *generalization* (33, 28%) and *clarification request* (27, 23%). The four CSs of *foreignizing* (0, 1%), *word coinage* (1, 2%), *other reformulation* (1, 3%) and *meaning replacement* (3, 3%) were least frequently used by both Science and Arts subjects.

Table 4.8: Frequencies and Chi-square Values of CSs Used by Arts and Science Subjects

Group	CSs	Frequency				Percentage %		Chi-square p value
		Science (n=114)		Arts (n=120)		Sci (CS use)	Arts (CS use)	
		Yes	No	Yes	No			
Avoidance	T Avoidance	10	104	5	115	9	4	.151
	M Abandonment	34	80	24	96	30	20	.082
	M Replacement	3	111	3	117	3	3	.949
IL-based CSs	Generalization	30	84	33	87	26	28	.838
	Paraphrase	45	69	54	66	39	45	.392
	Word Coinage	1	113	2	118	1	2	.592
	Restructuring	38	76	45	75	33	38	.505
	Approximation	14	100	26	94	12	22	.057
L1-based CSs	L Translation	12	102	15	105	11	13	.637
	L Switch	8	106	11	109	7	9	.547
	Foreignizing	0	114	1	119	0	1	.329
IL Negotiation	C C Check	15	99	17	103	13	14	.822
	P C Check	19	95	22	98	17	18	.737
	C Request	41	73	27	93	36	23	.023*
	C Check	12	102	5	115	11	4	.061
	O Reformulation	1	113	3	117	1	3	.338
	Repetition	33	81	43	77	29	36	.261

*$p \le .05$ **$p \le .01$

To determine if these differences in CSs employment between Science subjects and Arts subjects were significant or not, the frequencies were subjected to a Chi-square test analysis through SPSS 15.0 for windows. The results in Table 4.8 showed that there was only one significant difference between the Science subjects and the Arts subjects in the use of *clarification request* at $p = .023 < .05$. This showed that the Science subjects employed *clarification request* more frequently than the Arts

subjects in the two speaking tasks. As for the other strategies, there seemed to be no significant differences in the Chi-square results between Science and Arts subjects.

The following can serve as an example. One Science student acted in the role play as a shop assistant and after the customer complained a lot about the goods he had bought, the assistant asked " … what are the problems with them?" to make a clarification request. Another Science subject used an incomplete sentence "what … what problems?" to express the same meaning of the above. "What do you mean? You want what … what do you want?" was another example to show the *clarification request*.

4.4.3 Gender

Gender as one of the four variables was also examined in the study. The analysis revealed something interesting from the data. Table 4.9 demonstrates the results on male subjects and female subjects' use of the communication strategies.

The results in Table 4.9 indicate that the top strategies used by the male subjects were *paraphrase* (46, 38%), *restructuring* (37, 30%), *message abandonment* (36, 30%) and *clarification request* (36, 30%) whereas the least used strategies by the male subjects were *foreignizing* (0, 0%), *word coinage* (1, 1%) and *other reformulation* (1, 1%). Table 4.9 also says that the top strategies used by the female subjects were *paraphrase* (53, 47%), *restructuring* (46, 41%) and *repetition* (42, 38%) whereas the least strategies used by the female subjects were *topic avoidance* (0, 0%), *foreignizing* (1, 1%) and *word coinage* (2, 2%).

Table 4.9: Frequencies and Chi-square Values of CSs Used by Male and Female Subjects

Group	CSs	Frequency				Percentage %		Chi-square p value
		Male (n=122)		Female (n=112)		M (CS use)	F (CS use)	
		Yes	No	Yes	No			
Avoidance	T Avoidance	15	107	0	112	12	0	.000**
	M Abandonment	36	86	22	90	30	20	.081
	M Replacement	4	118	2	110	3	2	.470
IL-based CSs	Generalization	34	88	29	83	28	26	.734
	Paraphrase	46	76	53	59	38	47	.137
	Word Coinage	1	121	2	110	1	2	.512
	Restructuring	37	85	46	66	30	41	.086
	Approximation	18	104	22	90	15	20	.321
L1-based CSs	L Translation	10	112	17	95	8	15	.095
	L Switch	12	110	7	105	10	6	.316
	Foreignizing	0	122	1	111	0	1	.296
IL Negotiation	C C Check	16	106	16	96	13	14	.795
	P C Check	19	103	22	90	16	20	.413
	C Request	36	86	32	80	30	29	.875
	C Check	13	109	4	108	11	4	.037*
	O Reformulation	1	121	3	109	1	3	.273
	Repetition	34	88	42	70	28	38	.116

*$p \leq .05$ **$p \leq .01$

To determine which frequencies of CSs employment between male and female subjects are significantly different, a Chi-square test was run to compare the relationship between the two groups of strategies. In Table 4.9, results show that p values were significantly different for two strategies, namely, *topic avoidance and comprehension check* ($p = .000 < .05$, $p = .016 < .05$ and $p = .037 < .05$ respectively). That is to say, male subjects employed the two CSs significantly different from female

subjects in the two tasks. The discussion part (See Chapter 5) will deal with this further.

The above analyses demonstrate the effects of learners' proficiency, task, academic field or gender on types of CSs employment. The findings obtained from the two speaking tasks suggest that there existed significant relationships between the four variables and the CSs use.

Through Chi-square tests, subjects' responses to the questionnaire can also elicit the following results shown in Table 4.10. These Chi-square tests indicate whether there are relationships between the employment of these CSs, on the one hand, and the three variables, namely, proficiency, gender and field, on the other.

Table 4.10: Frequencies and Chi-square *p* Values according to their Proficiency and Gender

Variables	Proficiency					Gender				
	HP		LP		*p* value	M		F		*p* value
CSs	(Yes)	(No)	(Yes)	(No)		(Yes)	(No)	(Yes)	(No)	
6	56	3	47	10	.033*					
8						32	28	45	11	.002**
9	42	17	30	27	.039*					
11	28	31	38	19	.037*					
12	12	47	28	29	.001**					
15	54	16	41	11	.006**					
16	48	11	36	21	.028*	49	11	35	21	.021*

*p≤.05 **p≤.01

It was found that there is a significant difference between HP students and LP students in the use of CSs 6, 9, 11, 12, 15 and 16, because their *p* values are less than 0.05. The result of strategy 6 *paraphrase* indicates that HP respondents tend to employ this strategy more frequently than LP respondents, according to their frequencies (56/47) and *p* = .033 < .05. The result of strategy 9 *approximation* shows that HP respondents tend to employ this strategy more frequently than LP respondents

according to their frequencies (42/30) and $p = .039 < .05$. In contrast, the result of strategy 11 *literal translation* suggests that HP respondents employ this strategy less frequently than LP respondents according to their frequencies (28/38) and $p = .037 < .05$. This result of strategy 12 *language switch* means that HP respondents use this strategy less frequently than LP respondents according to their frequencies (12/28) and $p = .001 < .05$. However, the result of strategy 15 *comprehension check* suggests that HP respondents tend to employ this strategy more commonly than LP respondents, according to their frequencies (54/41) and $p = .006 < .05$. Also, the result of strategy 16 *reformulation* indicates that HP respondents tend to employ this strategy more often than LP respondents, according to their frequencies (48/36) and $p = .028 < .05$. In short, CSs 6, 9, 11, 12, 15 and 16 have significant relationships with the respondents' proficiency level.

After the results tackled the CSs employed by high proficiency and low proficiency students, the following will take into account of the effect of gender on the use of CSs. The results in Table 4.10 can also suggest that there was a significant difference between male and female students in using CSs 8 *restructuring*, according to their frequencies (32/45) and $p = .002 < .05$. It means that male students tend to use this strategy more commonly than female students. Also, there was another significant relationship between male and female students in using strategy 16 *reformulation*, according to their frequencies (49/11) and $p = .021 < .05$. This suggests that male students use the strategy *reformulation* more commonly than female students.

As for another variable, academic field, it is found that all the significance values are more than 0.05, which means there is no relationship between these 18 CSs and academic field. The results of the questionnaire showed that there are no

differences between Science students and Arts students in their behaviors of using CSs.

4.5 Findings for Research Question Three

Is there an effect of learner's L2 proficiency, task, academic major or gender on the four main categories of CSs employment?

One of the purposes of the study was to investigate the relationships between the four variables and the four groups of CSs, namely, *avoidance, IL-based CSs, L1-based CSs* and *IL negotiation*. To answer this question, the 17 CSs in the taxonomy were grouped into 4 categories: 1. **Avoidance** including *topic avoidance, message abandonment and meaning replacement,* 2. **IL-based CSs** including *generalization, paraphrase, word coinage, restructuring and approximation,* 3. **Transfer by using L1-based strategies** including *literal translation, language switch and foreignizing,* 4. **Interlanguage negotiation** including *code-based confirmation check, positive confirmation check, clarification request, comprehension check, other reformulation and repetition.*

After the four groups of CSs were formed, their data were put into SPSS and run through a series of Chi-square tests. The results in Table 4.11 show the frequencies and *p* values of each group of CSs related to different variables including task, proficiency, field and gender.

Table 4.11: Frequencies and Chi-square Values of the Four Categories of Strategy

Category	G1	G2	G3	G4
All subjects	26.3	57.6	21	39.6
CI/RP	20/6	49/9	11/10	12/28
P value	.000**	.000**	.599	.000**
HP/LP	8.3/18	34.4/23.2	7.5/13.5	23/16.7
P value	.002**	.034*	.014*	.067
Science/Arts	15.7/10.7	25.6/32	9.5/10.2	20.2/19.5
P value	.129	.295	.055	.489
Male/Female	18.3/8	27.2/30.4	12/9	19.8/19.8
P value	.002**	.134	.097	.231

$*p \leq .05$ $**p \leq .01$

Notes: CI and RP refer to concept identification and role play respectively of the task types while HP and LP refer to high proficiency and low proficiency respectively.

With reference to the use of G1 avoidance by all subjects, there was a significant difference in frequencies between CI and RP tasks (20/6) at $p = .000 < .05$; a significant difference in frequencies between HP and LP subjects (8.3/18) at $p = .002 < .05$; and also a significant difference in frequencies between Male and Female subjects (18.3/8) at $p = .002 < .05$. However, there was no significant difference between Science and Arts subjects (15.7/10.7) at $p = .129 > .05$.

The first group avoidance CSs includes three strategies topic avoidance, message abandonment and meaning replacement. As shown in Table 4.4, students used the three strategies more commonly in the conception identification than in the role play. This suggests that students significantly used more avoidance CSs in concept identification due to the nature of the tasks. Since examples were given to illustrate topic avoidance and message abandonment in section 4.3, the strategy

meaning replacement is seen in the following example:

(1) A subject (S20) tried to explain the word "courage" by saying **"this word is the *positive* word of nervousness. They spoke to you to make you (feel down)."** (HP, Arts and Female)

Here the student expressed the meaning in another way which replaced the original meaning. Thus the native speaker seemed more and more confused about the concept described by the subject.

Regarding G2 strategy of *IL-based CSs* for all subjects, there seemed to be a significant difference in frequencies between CI and RP tasks (49/9) at $p = .000 < .05$; and also a significant difference in frequencies between HP and LP subjects (34.4/23.2) at $p = .034 < .05$. However, there was no significant difference found between Science and Arts subjects (25.6/32) at $p = .295 > .05$; and between Male and Female subjects (27.2/30.4) at $p = .134 > .05$.

IL-based CSs covers *generalization, paraphrase, word coinage, restructuring and approximation.* Except the strategy *word coinage* which was found through interview, students used the other four CSs more frequently in concept identification than in role play. There was almost no *word coinage* found in either of the tasks.

Restructuring also occurred very commonly in the output, as in the following examples:

(1) A subject (S2) tried to explain "peace" by saying "**it means some place there is no war, people live very happily. For example, two countries, um .. they don't .. have wars**." (HP, Science and Male)
(2) A subject (S12) wanted to describe "freedom" **by saying "and next one um if you are in .. prison and you hope it, which means you can do what you want to do**." (HP, Arts and Female)

(3) A subject (S14) described "mailbox" by saying "**if you send an email to .. to your friend, where is your friend can read? … If you use a computer um um you want to get in touch with your friend um you send email to your friend, where can he read it**?"   (LP, Science and Female)

(4) A subject (S4) described "intelligence" by saying "**the second is .. um .. it is used to describe a man. He is so smart and clever**."
NN: Um explain little more.
S4: **Um how to say. I think maybe we say a machine knows very largely and it is so ….**   (HP, Arts and Male)

(5) A subject (S14) explained "loyalty" by saying "**without it, the couple may divorce, friendship may break up. The opposite condition is cheating or something like that**."   (HP, Science and Male)

(6) A subject (S23) explained "experience" by saying "**it means we have skills in doing something. … let me see how to describe it to you clearly? For example, our teacher before she is a teacher, she must have something, have something, something done**."   (LP, Arts and Female)

The strategy *approximation* appeared less commonly in the data output, we could still find a few though. Look at the following:

(1) A subject (S26) described "selfishness" as "**… caring about um your own disadvantage or advantage and don't um care other's advantage or disadvantage**."
NN: Can you say it again and slow down?
S26: **Um you care about your own your own advantage or disadvantage.**
NN: Selfishness   (HP, Arts and Female)

(2) NN: Kind-hearted?
A subject (S8) wanted to say "the former part is right", but he said "**The front is right**" instead.   (LP, Arts and Female)

However, *IL-based CSs* were not easily found in the role play except for the two strategies *restructuring* and *approximation*. Instances of *restructuring* are as follows:

(1) Customer: My brother doesn't like the T-shirt, so I want my money back.
S1 as a shop assistant: What do you mean? **You want what, what do you want?**   (LP, Arts and Male)

(2) Shop assistant: What's wrong with the TV set you bought in our shop?
S2 as a customer: … you know how bad it is. It's terrible. I even can't turn it on. And when I take it home **I found it was broken, doesn't work**.   (HP, Arts and Female)

(3) Shop assistant: What do you want with the goods?
S3 as a customer: I *wantn't* **I don't want** …   (LP, Science and Male)

(4) Customer: I bought two goods in your shop, .. but I found sth wrong with them?

S5 as shop assistant: What problems with it, **with them**?

(LP, Arts and Female)

Approximation, though not many, can still be seen in the following examples:

(1) S5 as a shop assistant: **… you must be sure that it .. you .. it's in the limited date**. (The student here would like to say "warranty", but she didn't know) (HP, Arts and female)

(2) S7 as a customer: **The T-shirt is (for) my brother's birthday**.

(LP, Arts and Female)

Concerning G3 strategy of *transfer by using L1-based strategies*, there was one significant difference in the frequencies between HP and LP subjects (7.5/13.5) at $p = .014 < .05$. However, there was no significant difference in the frequencies found between CI and RP tasks (11/10) at $p = .599 > .05$; between Science and Arts subjects (9.5/10.2) at $p = .055 > .05$ and between Male and Female subjects (12/9) at $p = .097 > .05$.

L1-based CSs includes *literal translation, language switch* and *foreignizing,* there was no significant difference in the use of *L1-based CSs* between the two tasks (See above). In both tasks, not many *L1-based CSs* were found, but still there occurred some significant differences in the use of individual strategies such as *literal translation* and *language switch*. Not many strategies of *literal translation* were found in one-way task whereas a few strategies of *language switch* were found there. But still, some examples of *literal translation* are identified in the performance data of both one-way and two-way tasks:

(1) A subject (S7) tried to explain "embarrassment" by saying "**when somebody ask someone question, um that you um want not to answer and you um very shy**." (LP, Science and Male)

(2) A subject (S11) described "chimney" by saying "**and Santa Claus, Santa Claus from where**?" (HP, Arts and Male)

(3) Customer: I found the TV set cannot work after I have (water) on it?
S9 as a shop assistant: You said **you have what on (the TV set)**?
(HP, Arts and Female)

(4) Shop assistant: Did you mind I ask you some questions?
S4 as a customer: **Yes, please**. (Here she should say "no, I don't mind")
(LP, Arts and Female)

(5) Customer: My brother doesn't like this T-shirt.
S13 as a shop assistant: … **but the style of this kind of T-shirt is .., the quality it is very excellent.** (HP, Arts and Male)

In terms of G4 strategy of *interlanguage negotiation*, there was a significant difference between CI and RP tasks (12/28) at $p = .000 < .05$. However, there was no significant difference in the frequencies between HP and LP subjects (23/16.7) at $p = .067 > .05$; between Science and Arts subjects (20.2/19.5) at $p = .489 > .05$ and between Male and Female subjects (19.8/19.8) at $p = .231 > .05$.

It is quite interesting that two strategies *comprehension check and repetition* were not found more commonly in the role play than in the concept identification. The following examples are concerned with *comprehension check* which occurred in the concept identification:

(1) A subject (S31) tried here to convey "misfortune" by saying "when we have seen some people who suffer some disaster, or um any bad things, **what mood do you feel**?" (HP, Science and Male)

(2) A subject (S22) attempted to explain "honesty" by saying "… if I don't tell a lie to anybody, **what quality may I have**?" (HP, Science and Male)

(3) A subject (S30) described "destiny" by saying "it's called fate. **Do you know "fate"**?" (HP, Science and Male)

The interview provided the information that in the role play task, some of the low proficiency students seemed to talk with their peers in Chinese when they could not find the suitable English word, while they still tried to stick to English even by *repetitions* in the concept identification task when facing English native speakers.

Whether or not *L1-based CSs* might happen probably depends on the interlocutor i.e. learners' peer or an English native speaker. There appeared one interesting example of *L1-based CS* in the interview when a high proficiency student from Optics once explained *pollen* to an English native speaker by using literal translation. He translated literally from *hua fen* in Chinese into *flower powder* because he did not know the correct word *pollen*. However, it seemed quite interesting that the native interlocutor could figure out the meaning and offer the correct word *pollen*. Here, the *literal translation* strategy did solve the communication problem.

However, most *IL negotiation CSs* appeared more frequently in the two-way task than in the one-way task because the nature of role play required students to negotiate a lot so that they could solve the communication problems presented to them. The CSs included in this group are *code-based confirmation check, positive confirmation check, clarification request, comprehension check, other reformulation* and *repetition*. The following demonstrates the examples of these CSs one by one. The first type of strategy *code-based confirmation check* is seen in the following examples:

(1) Customer: I bought a camera from your shop. But after I took the camera to the beach, I discovered it was ［broken］.
   S22 as a shop assistant: ［**broken**］?   (LP, Science and Male)
(2) Shop assistant: … I can call my manager .. um this, I have no right about this.
   S21 as a customer: What? **Your manager**?   (HP, Arts and Female)
Positive confirmation check shows as follows:

(1) Customer: My brother doesn't .. like the color … and I want to know .. how to solve the problem.
   S4 as a shop assistant: So I … I will change (change) another T-shirt for you. **Do you agree**?   (HP, Science and Female)
(2) Customer: Can I .. can I .. refund the camera I bought last week from your shop?
   S11 as a shop assistant: Yes, **what**?   (HP, Arts and Male)

Clarification request occurred most frequently in the role play task. Examples including *clarification requests* are indicated:

(1) Shop assistant: I can't do it. I must … go to ask my manager … about how to do it.
   S6 as a customer: **What**? I beg your pardon?   (LP, Arts and Female)
(2) Customer: Can I .. can I .. refund the camera?
   S11 as a shop assistant: Yes, **what**?   (HP, Arts and Male)

It is quite interesting that *comprehension checks* were not found more commonly in the role play than in concept identification. The following are samples of *comprehension check* in the role play task.

(1) Customer: I don't like the T-shirt. I want you .. give my money back.
   S30 as a shop assistant: That is not my problem. You you **understand**?
                                                       (LP, Arts and Male)
(2) Customer: I wonder if I can return the camera I bought here.
   S18 as a shop assistant: In our shop there are some rules for customers *who what* to return goods. **You know, yeah**?   (HP, Science and Female)

The strategy *other reformulation* appeared least commonly in the data output. Some examples are shown in the following excerpts.

(1) Customer: … I carry it to the beach, but I find then *taken* the work.
   S16 as a shop assistant: You mean … **don't work**?
   Customer: Yes, **don't work**. I think you can change a good (quality).
                                                       (LP, Arts and Female)
(2) Customer: Ok. I will take it.
   S27 as a shop assistant: Yes. You mean you **buy it**?
                                                       (HP, Science and Female)

Repetition as a strategy which occurred very often in the concept identification could also be noticed in the role play, not so often though.

(1) S21 as a customer: I couldn't spend money to buy something … **to buy something.**   (LP, Science and Male)
(2) S18 as a customer: But there is problem … **but there is a problem** to both of them, **but there is a problem to both of them.** (LP, Science and Male)

The results, therefore, lead us to conclude that there were significant relationships between CSs use and task when subjects use G1 *avoidance CSs,* G2

IL-based CSs and G4 *IL negotiation CSs*; there were also significant relationships between CSs use and subjects' proficiency when subjects use G1 *avoidance CSs*, G2 *IL-based CS*s and G3 *L1-based CSs*; and there was also a significant relationship between CSs use and gender when subjects use G1 *avoidance CSs*. However, there was no significant relationship found between CSs and major in using all of the four groups of CSs.

4.6 Findings for Research Question Four

Are the CSs employed by the learners successful? If yes, what is the effect of learner's L2 proficiency, task, academic major or gender on the success of CSs employment?

When subjects were carrying out the two tasks of concept identification and role play, one English native speaker and one English teacher (from College English Department) were invited to observe and score the subjects' performance by five scales: (0) not successful, (1) least successful, (2) moderately successful, (3) quite successful and (4) very successful (See Section 3.4.3).

All the scores were put into SPSS and independent t-tests were processed to compare the means between concept identification and role play (Task), between HP and LP (Proficiency), between Science and Arts (Field) and between Male and Female (Gender). All the results from t-tests were shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Means and t-ratios of the Subjects' Scores in the Success of Communication Performance

	Task		Proficiency		Major		Gender	
	CI	**RP**	**HP**	**LP**	**S**	**A**	**M**	**F**
N	117	117	120	114	114	120	122	112
Mean	3.18	2.66	3.43	2.39	2.89	2.95	2.73	3.13
SD	1.36	1.03	.86	1.34	1.30	1.17	1.30	1.12
t **value**	3.31**		7.03**		-.40		-2.48**	
Sig	.001		.000		.692		.013	

*p$\leq$.05 **p$\leq$.01

Table 4.12 indicated that subjects were more successful in doing concept identification ($\bar{x} = 3.18$) than in doing role play ($\bar{x} = 2.66$), and there was a significant difference between CI and RP at $t = 3.31$, $p = .001 < .05$. Also, HP subjects ($\bar{x} = 3.43$) were found to be significantly more successful than LP subjects ($\bar{x} = 2.39$) at $t = 7.03$, $p = .000 < .05$. Female subjects ($\bar{x} = 3.13$) were significantly more successful than male subjects ($\bar{x} = 2.73$) at $t = -2.48$, $p = .013 < .05$. Although the mean of Arts' subjects ($\bar{x} = 2.95$) was more than that of Science's subjects ($\bar{x} = 2.89$), there was no significant difference between them at $t = -.40$, $p = .692 > .05$. Arts' subjects could not be said to be more successful than Science subjects.

To determine that there were significant differences between the success and the 17 CSs, and even between the success and the four groups of CSs, ANOVA was conducted to check one by one. Table 4.13 shows the results.

The results can be interpreted as follows. In terms of the four CSs categories, the *p* values of the three groups, namely, *avoidance, IL-based CSs* and *IL negotiation* were .000 < .05, .000 < .05 and .028 < .05 respectively, but for *L1-based strategies*, *p* value is .052 more than .05. It indicates that there are significant

differences between *avoidance, IL-based CSs* and *IL negotiation* and the success of the subjects while there was no significant difference between *L1-based strategies* and the success of the subjects.

Table 4.13: ANOVA Results for Interactions of Success and 18 CSs

Group of CSs	CSs	Sig	
Avoidance	T Avoidance	.000**	
	M Abandonment	.000**	.000**
	M Replacement	.014*	
IL-based CSs	Generalization	.000**	
	Paraphrase	.000**	
	Word Coinage	.854	.000**
	Restructuring	.047*	
	Approximation	.002**	
L1-based strategies	L Translation	.311	
	L Switch	.472	.052
	Foreignizing	.555	
IL negotiation	C C Check	.224	
	P C Check	.006**	
	C Request	.000**	
	C Check	.404	.028*
	O Reformulation	.282	
	Repetition	.068	

*p ≤ .05 **p ≤ .01

Regarding *avoidance CSs*, there are significant differences between all of the three strategies, namely, *topic avoidance, message abandonment, meaning replacement* and the success of subjects at $p = .00 < .05$, $p = .00 < .05$ and $p = .014 < .05$ respectively. As for *IL-based CSs*, namely, *generalization, paraphrase, word coinage, restructuring* and *approximation*, there are significant differences between all the strategies except *word coinage* ($p = .854 > .05$) and the success of subjects at $p = .00 < .05$, $p = .00 < .05$, $p = .05$ and $p = .00 < .05$ respectively. As for *L1-based CSs* including *literal translation, language switch and foreignizing*, there are no significant differences between all the three strategies and the success of subjects at $p = .31 > .05$, $p = .47 > .05$ and $p = .55 > .05$. With reference to *IL negotiation CSs*,

there are no significant differences between these strategies including *code-based confirmation check* ($p = .22 > .05$), *comprehension check* ($p = .40 > .05$), *other reformulation* ($p = .28 > .05$) and the success of the subjects while there are significant differences between the other two, namely, *positive confirmation check and clarification request* at $p = .01 < .05$ and $p = .00 < .05$ and the success of the subjects.

4.7 Some More Findings from the Interview

After the subjects' responses to the three basic questions were later examined closely, some of the results of the semi-structures interview were presented in the following except those dealt with under the four research questions.

1. There appeared some differences when learners communicate with their peers or with English native speakers. Talking with English native speakers, learners felt that there existed differences in terms of cultural background. An example was that some students failed to convey across the meaning of *courage* to an American, because they did not have the same cultural background. Talking with learners' peers, however, they felt that they could understand each other much better, even sometimes they did not think their English was good enough. Another example was that students explained the word *willow* from the aspect of Chinese history. In the ancient time, literate people saw their friends off by giving them the willow, showing that everything would be smooth. However, the American did not have the same background and therefore could not understand.

2. During the interview almost all of the students believed that their communication problems were due to their insufficient vocabulary.

3. Although some of the students have learned English more than six years, in the process of learning they are not exposed enough to authentic English. They particularly have not had enough chance to speak English in real situations. While communicating with English native speakers, the students felt nervous and were afraid that their communication could not go smoothly and embarrassment may happen.

4. Based on the two tasks and the interview data, those students who speak English more fluently and clearly could be considered risk-takers (See Chen 1990 for reference). They were not afraid of taking risks to speak English even though they also came across some communication problems.

5. In the semi-structured interview, most of the students mentioned that they were probably aware of CSs use after they performed the two tasks, answered the questionnaire and then were interviewed. Learners' motivation to learn English can probably be stimulated after they have stronger awareness of CSs use and do find that CSs can be helpful in their spoken communications to solve problems.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the discussions in relation to the four research questions and summarizes the findings of the investigation based on the results of the previous chapter. Firstly, types of strategies used by the subjects in terms of the four variables, namely, proficiency, task, academic field and gender are discussed. Secondly, the findings of the self-report questionnaire are addressed to make a comparison with those from the actual speaking tasks. Thirdly, the findings of a follow-up semi-structured interview are explored and discussed to get a deeper understanding of the research questions. Lastly, a conclusion is drawn from the results of the present study including a summary, pedagogical implications, limitations and research suggestions.

5.1 Communication Strategies Most Used and Least Used by the Subjects

The subjects in this study included 117 students. Based on the Chi-square results, the difference in the subjects' number between high proficiency and low proficiency, between science and arts, and between male and female, do not have any effects on their CSs use.

The results in the preceding chapter (Section 4.3) showed that the most frequently used CSs by the subjects in this study were paraphrase，restructuring,

repetition, clarification request, generalization and message abandonment; in contrast, the least commonly used CSs were comprehension check, topic avoidance, meaning replacement, other reformulation, word coinage and foreignizing. The following provides the discussion on the most and least CSs employment in students' performance.

5.1.1 Communication Strategies Most Used by the Subjects

It could be noticed that *paraphrase, restructuring and generalization* are three strategies which reflect various possibilities and ways learners have to cope with communicative problems by using their interlanguage system. As reviewed in the literature (section 2.5), Færch and Kasper (1980) included the three CSs in the *IL-based strategies*. Also, the three CSs were included among the group of *IL-based CSs* in the taxonomy of the present study. The examination of the three CSs could offer a picture of the learners' interlanguage system.

By using a *paraphrase* strategy, learners solve their problems with a construction which is well-formed according to their IL system, which means that learners focus on characteristic properties or functions of the intended concept. Consider the following excerpts for example.

(1) A learner tries to explain "radio" by saying

"It's a machine. When some news *are* broadcasted, you can use it to hear …."

(2) A learner tries to explain "loneliness" by saying

"If you want to go anywhere, nobody comes with you."

(3) A learner tries to explain "mushroom" by saying

"I can use it to make a soup. It looks like an umbrella and grows after rain."

(4) A learner tries to explain "destiny" by saying

"You can describe it … um you can't control and … um that's the God who controls it. It has the same meaning with "fate"."

Paraphrases in the study took the form of descriptions which normally give the functions, shapes or colors of the concrete referent. As for the abstract concept, the situations or feelings were normally addressed to give a clearer picture, because it was relatively more difficult for learners to describe an abstract concept than to describe a concrete concept.

By using a *restructuring* strategy, learners communicate their intended message without meaning reduction after they begin to realize they cannot complete their original plan and develop an alternative one. This strategy is different from *message abandonment* in that the latter can be considered the reduction parallel to *restructuring* (Færch & Kasper, 1980). A *restructuring* strategy can take the form of exemplification and self-corrections according to the output data occurred in the speaking tasks. Learners may decide on giving examples to restructure their intended meaning in order to make it understandable by keeping the conversation going. Examples can help listeners figure out the intended meaning in the continuum of more related information. Self-corrections normally demonstrate the learner correcting a grammatical item, removing an error so that output conforms to target language norms. There is thus a communication disruption, but there is no any risk of a misunderstanding and the correction does improve comprehension. The following examples show the two forms of restructuring.

(5) **I listen to some programs from this machine. For example, this is BBC and I use …**

(6) **Um… the camera I .. I .. I don't want it. So you um .. give me um other thing um for example, shoe or watch.**

(7) **That is to say, I watch something, but I can't do it. Even though I can't do it, I want to do it.**

(8) **It means we have skills in doing something.**

(9) **So I want you can help .. can you help me?**

(10) **I hope you the, er .. I hope you give me, my money back.**

(11) **What item, what are the items?**

(12) **Ye … you hope it, wish to have it.**

Excerpts (5) to (8) show that there are some expressions such as *for example*, *that is to say* and *it means* etc. used by learners to initiate their restructuring of the intended meaning after they realized that their original plan was unable to reach their goal. These expressions turned out to be successful to make the listeners understand speakers' intended messages. The exemplification strategy used by the subjects in the examples should be emphasized in the teaching of CSs, which contributed much to the understanding of English communication.

Excerpts (9) to (12) suggest that learners make their utterances more understandable by correcting a grammatical item, i.e. self-correct, removing an error or changing expressions. As observed in the findings, *restructuring* strategy of self-corrections appeared to be successful in communication due to the fact that the listener can have a better understanding of what learners restructured.

By using a *generalization* strategy, learners solve problems with IL items which they would not normally use in such contexts. *Generalization* differs from the reduction strategy of *meaning replacement* in that the learner, when generalizing, does

not change his communicative goal: the learner assumes that his original goal can be reached by using a generalized IL item or, in other words, that the generalized item can convey the appropriate meaning in the given context. As an instance of *generalization* we include the following examples to show how learners in the study resorted to *generalization*.

(13) A learner uses "instrument" to refer to "piano" by saying **"It's a big music instrument..."**

(14) A learner refers to "chimney" by saying **"It's a building. It's a … it's very tall, very big."**

(15) A learner describes "willow" by saying **"It is a tree. It grow(s) beside of .. er .. river."**

(16) A student addresses "culture" by asking **"What do you like about China?"**

The nature of the task employed in the study forced the learners to use the strategy of *generalization* because they were put in the situation where they had to describe the concepts assigned to them. Even so, some learners did not resort to this strategy. For example, a learner began his description by saying *"There is an area full of water, sometimes have fish in it."* Those learners might believe that they could get straight to the point without using any *generalization*. The above examples from (13) to (15) indicate that learners use a superordinate item in reference to its hyponym (Varadi, 1980). The item used by the learner is more generalized than the original one, but it can serve as a lexical substitute to fill a gap, believed to convey the learner's intended meaning. This *generalization* strategy used by the learners in the study can contribute to the success of their communications (See 3.4.3 for success measurement). Example (16) is a very interesting case where the English native

speaker understood the meaning immediately (it was recorded by the researcher in the note), which functions as a typical sentence showing the strategy of *generalization*.

The preceding discussion of the three *IL-based strategies*, namely, *paraphrase, restructuring* and *generalization* conforms with the research findings by Bialystok (1980) in that *IL-based strategies* are most likely to lead to understanding. Bialystok stated in her research that the best strategies seem to be those based in the target language and taking account of the specific features of the intended concept. Learners with greater formal ability in the target language or more experience in employing CSs may be more likely to use those strategies based on the target language than on some other languages. The three *IL-based CSs* are quite effective in the present study and have great potential for leading to communicative success.

Although the other three strategies of *repetition*, *clarification request*, and *message abandonment* are excluded from *IL-based CSs*, they have been found to be commonly used by the subjects in the study. The following discussion will deal with them respectively.

In reference to the strategy of *repetition*, learners repeat what has been previously uttered. Williams et al (1997) suggest that repetitions are defined by form only and play a variety of functions in negotiation of meaning. The study calls our attention to the finding that repetitions were not only used in negotiation work but also in concept description. The following are a few examples of repetitions.

(17) A: Oh, yes, but I have another problem.

B: **What's wrong?**

A: The camera can't work now. I don't know the reason

B: I want to know **what's wrong with** the camera.

(18) A: So I want to ask you to [get my money back].

     B: [**get my money back**]?

(19) It's just an opinion of somebody. I can just say **it's an opinion.**

(20) Um it often **lives in rivers, lives in rivers.**

     In example (17), the learner's repetition is a kind of self-repetition which functions as an attempt to negotiate meaning between the customer and the shop assistant. On the other hand, example (18) shows that the learner repeats part of the interlocutor's utterance with the same purpose of negotiating the meaning. In contrast, examples (19) and (20) may not function as negotiation work, but they seem to emphasize learners' implication or just to fill the pauses. The *repetition* strategy may give the speaker time at a lexical selection point to reorganize his words and ideas. This finding is in accordance with Færch & Kasper's research work (1980), which claims that by repetition speakers could gain more time for the reorganization of their thought.

     In reference to the strategy of *clarification request*, it has been found that learners attempt to resolve inadequate communication by making requests for clarification. *Clarification requests* do not present the listener with information to respond to. Thus, in these cases the respondent has to do more interactional work since the request is an open one, as in the following examples.

(21) A: **What item, what are the items**?

(22) A: I didn't tell you?

     B: Yes.

     A: I can't do that. Limitation is limitation. I can't do that beyond limitation.

     B: **Why?** But it's not my fault.

(23) A: I want to get my money back and return the t-shirt.

B: **What?**

Since the two-way task is designed for learners to solve problems through negotiation of meaning, *clarification requests* are found frequently in the data output. Learners need to make requests in order to clarify their interlocutors' information and then successful negotiations may arise from these *clarification requests*.

In reference to the strategy of *message abandonment*, learners tried but gave up. Communication on a topic is initiated but then cut short because the learner runs into difficulty with a target language form or rule. The learner stops in mid-sentence, with no appeal to authority to help finish the utterance. The distinction between *topic avoidance* and *message abandonment* is that the learner says nothing at all about a given topic for *topic avoidance* whereas he tries to say something but gives up in the mid-utterance for *message abandonment*. In the present study this strategy of *message abandonment* occurred commonly in the learners' speaking output, particularly in the one-way task. As an instance of this strategy the following examples show how learners resorted to *message abandonment* in the study.

(24) S14: **The king *hope* people for .. for .. his .. I'm sorry. My English is poor.**

(25) S15: **In our um .. in our school .. in front of it. I don't know.**

(26) S16: **He .. he is nervous, but he needs power…**

(27) S17: **…I think, the shirt, I didn't .. I never wear it, and the camera is broken, it's not my (mis…)**

Examples (24) and (25) display that the learners tried to utter something but gave up by saying words like *I don't know* or *I'm sorry,* which signal the learners' stop without being able to continue i.e. message abandonment. As for examples (26)

and (27), the learners just stopped in the middle of the sentence due to the fact that they could not carry on their utterances. Here the strategy of *message abandonment* shows learners' attempt to communicate a meaning, which is aborted midstream.

5.1.2 Communication Strategies Least Used by the Subjects

The preceding discussions tackled the most frequently used strategies by the subjects in the study. In what follows, we will focus on the least commonly used CSs i.e. *comprehension check*, *topic avoidance*, *meaning replacement*, *other reformulation*, *word coinage* and *foreignizing*.

Comprehension checks are utterances attempting to confirm that the listener has understood what the speaker has said. These are not limited to code i.e. a lexical item, but are extended to comprehension of the task in the form of syntax. They may be as simple as "understand?" or take more extended form, such as "Do you know what I mean?"

In the present study, the learners did not use this strategy of *comprehension check* commonly. This may be due to the following reasons. Firstly, in the one-way task of concept identification, the listeners' responses were strictly limited to some sentences, thereby preventing the NSs as listeners from being involved thoroughly in the conversation. As a result, the subjects hardly needed to ask for more comprehension checks although in the output only a few subjects resorted to comprehension checks even the English native listener could only say "yes" or "no". Secondly, against our expectation, the two-way task of role play in this study did not trigger more *comprehension checks* to happen despite the fact that *comprehension checks* often function as a strategy for learners to negotiate their meanings in order to solve a communication problem, as required in the task. The key point is that the

interactions in the role play are between students and students (NNS and NNS), and those students seemed to be able to comprehend their partners' words. *Comprehension checks* normally happen between NS and NNS as reviewed in literature. No matter who the listeners are, whether they are NSs or NNSs, it seems that speakers tend to check whether their own preceding utterance has been understood considering their distance of language (or culture).

Learners can try to do away with the problems in communication by adopting the *avoidance CSs* including *meaning replacement, topic avoidance* and *message abandonment*, resulting in the change of the initial communicative goal. The avoidance CSs are different from achievement CSs in that learners rely on the latter to attempt to tackle the communication problem directly by developing an alternative plan and keeping the communicative goal constant (Section 2.5).

It shows in the present study that learners resorted to achievement CSs more often than to avoidance CSs. Probably one of the reasons is that they realized the two tasks were assigned by the researcher, also their English teacher, to conduct a research study. It seemed that the subjects were highly motivated to be involved in these two kinds of tasks, which they said to be interesting and beneficial in the semi-structured interview. Thus, the subjects used the avoidance strategies less in order to try their best to accomplish the two tasks.

All *avoidance CSs* in the current study including *topic avoidance*, *message abandonment* and *meaning replacement* are considered functional reduction CSs (Faerch & Kasper, 1980). Here learners reduce their communicative goal in order to avoid the problem. Although *topic avoidance* and *message abandonment* result in learners giving up talking about a specific topic, this is not the case with *meaning*

replacement. Here, learners preserve the topic but refer to it by means of a more general expression. The result of *meaning replacement* is a certain amount of vagueness. Considering the reason provided above, *avoidance CSs* were not so often found in the study and there appeared only few examples in the output.

Some learners began to say things like *I don't know how to explain* or *I'm sorry I can't explain the word* to avoid talking about concepts. One example from the excerpt can show how the learner replaced the original meaning.

(28) S20: **This word is the positive (opposite) word of nervousness. … They speak to you to make you feel down …**

In reference to the strategies *other reformulation*, *word coinage* and *foreignizing*, the findings of the study show that the learners used these strategies the least frequently. The strategy *other reformulation* can be used to model the speaker's previous utterance. In the role play it occurred that the subjects rarely resorted to *other reformulation* to formulate speakers' previous words. The probable explanation was that the subjects seemed not to have enough ability to resort to this strategy. Because the subjects in one pair were kept almost at the same proficiency level, they did not make reformulations, as noted, in response to their partner's signal that there was a problem in comprehension. In addition, they seemed to understand each other by their languages with the preparation before the performance.

The CSs of *word coinage* and *foreignizing* are not common in the data either. *Word coinage* is the creation of L2 lexical items which do not exist in the target language or, if they do, have a contextually inappropriate meaning. *Foreignizing* native language (L1) items is the creation of non-existence or contextually inappropriate target language (L2) words by applying L2 morphology and/or

phonology to L1 lexical items. The reason why the two CSs were least occurring in the data is that there might exist a big distance between Chinese and English. For example, Chinese is visual-based language while English is acoustical-based language, which means Chinese are more like pictures. Chinese structure is not as strict as the English one. In Chinese, the meaning of the sentence can be solely expressed by the words without much concern on the grammatical structure. Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family whereas English belongs to the Indo-European family. Chinese words are written in characters whereas English words are written by means of alphabetic letters. These differences result in Chinese EFL learners' rare use of *L1-based CSs* like *foreignizing* and *word coinage.* (See few examples of *word coinage* from interview discussion in Section 5.7).

5.2 Communication Strategies Used by High and Low Proficiency Learners

In this study, high proficiency students are assumed to be in the later stage of the interlanguage system whereas low proficiency students are in the earlier stage. L2 learning can be conceived of as a process in which the learner gradually develops his IL system by establishing hypothetical rules, and by testing them out. As the use of CSs presuppose that the learner experiences a problem, this implies either that his IL system has not yet contained the appropriate rule, or that the appropriate IL rule is difficult to retrieve (Faerch & Kasper, 1980). When students with different proficiency levels use various CSs to solve their communication problems, the results may suggest their IL system to a certain degree, which means that they are in different stages of their interlanguage development.

Following is an explanation of the different types of CSs that were used by the high proficiency group and low proficiency group. Based on the results of the study (Section 4.4.1), those high proficiency students employed most frequently *paraphrase*, *restructuring* and *repetition* whereas those low proficiency students used *paraphrase*, *message abandonment* and *restructuring* most commonly.

In spite of the difference among the learners in this study in terms of their level of proficiency in English, the findings of the results suggest that the two strategies of *paraphrase* and *restructuring* are commonly used both by high and low proficiency groups. However, the frequencies in the findings also show that the high proficiency group used the two strategies more often than the low proficiency group due to the fact that the two CSs are IL-based, which depend more on learners' target language repertoire. L2 learners' IL is dynamic in that it is constantly changing. The high proficiency group is assumed to be in the later stage of IL system where they internalize the new language information better to form a new IL system and make better use of their existing IL structure subconsciously. As one of the five principal processes operating in IL, communication strategy is an identifiable approach by learners to communicate. The new IL system of the high proficiency group was in the direction of approaching the target language system although the distance between them seemed not easy to step across. Therefore, high proficiency group tend to use more *IL-based CSs* to get by as a result of benefiting themselves from their existing target language repertoire.

The strategy of *repetition* was another one used by both proficiency groups even though it seems that the high proficiency group preferred *repetition* a little bit more, but there was no significant difference between both proficiency groups

(Section 4.4.1). This finding does not support Chen's work (1990) where *repetition* was extensively used by the Chinese EFL learners of low proficiency. As suggested in the literature review, this strategy has not been observed and examined closely by the researchers in the other countries. This study thus made an attempt to deal with the strategy *repetition*, not deeply enough though. The low proficiency group was found in the present study to resort to *repetitions* less for help of communication. The reasons could be as follows. Firstly, learners in the study were eager to be involved in the two types of task. They clearly made every attempt rather than giving up. The low proficiency group students tried their best too although sometimes it seemed that they haven't had an awareness of strategic competence. Secondly, repetitions are considered to have a function of phatic communion (Chen, 1990), which can help learners keep their communication channels open and appear less embarrassed due to the interval silence. In the study those low proficiency students seemed more nervous to face NSs probably due to their anxiety of speaking English. Thirdly, some of the low proficiency students were found to mime a lot and even kept silent when they came across communication difficulties. It was likely that they did not have a kind of strategic competence to deal with the difficulties. Therefore, as low proficiency students they haven't had the awareness that repetitions can assist them to handle some of communication problems by giving them more time to think and reorganize their words.

Regarding the significant difference of CSs use between high and low proficiency groups, the low proficiency group significantly use such CSs as *topic avoidance*, *message abandonment* and *language switch* more commonly than the high proficiency group (Section 4.4.1). The result shows that compared to the high

proficiency group, low proficiency learners resorted to the reduction strategies of *topic avoidance* and *message abandonment* more frequently to compensate for their insufficient language repertoire. Also, the low proficiency group was found to switch to their L1 Chinese and to mime with some non-verbal gestures subconsciously even in face of English native speakers who cannot understand much Chinese. In so doing, the low proficiency group may feel less nervous and expect the listener to understand them better.

Still, a significant difference in strategy selection of *generalization* and *approximation* emerges between the high and the low proficiency levels. The findings in the study indicate that the high proficiency group employed *generalization* and *approximation* significantly more frequently than the low proficiency group. The two CSs are IL-based ones which are, as a whole, more effective in support of achieving understanding than *L1-based CSs*, and are the most likely to guarantee successful communication. Haastrup and Phillipson (1983) claim that their research findings support the hypothesis that *IL-based CSs* were inherently of greater communicative potential than *L1-based CSs* and have great potential for leading to full comprehension. The role of *IL-based CSs* in communication was of more importance because as one subcategory of communicative competence, strategic competence is demonstrated through communication strategies which enhance the effectiveness of communication.

While the preceding discussion is concerned with the individual CSs employed by the subjects, the following will focus on the four groups of CSs. Generally speaking, from the findings of the results, it was found that a significant difference exists between the high and low proficiency groups in using *avoidance CSs*

and *IL-based CSs*, but no significant difference between them in using *L1-based CSs* and *negotiation CSs*. Namely, HP learners use *IL-based CSs* significantly more commonly than LP learners whereas LP learners use *avoidance CSs* significantly more commonly than HP learners. This finding supports much of the previous research on this point. The reason why there was no significant difference in using *L1-based CSs* and *negotiation CSs* between them could lie in the context of the communication task and the big difference between Chinese and English. In the one-way task, students must convey their meanings to the native speaker and this situation where the interlocutors do not share the same L1 and cultural background did not encourage them to use more *L1-based CSs*. In the two-way task, students were found to use some *L1-based CSs*, but not so much. Because the two-way task put emphasis on the meaning negotiation, both HP and LP students often resort to the *negotiation CSs* so that they could solve their communicative problems.

The findings of the results suggest that HP subjects were more successful than LP subjects in getting their meanings across and negotiating their meanings. The type of CSs used by HP learners had greater communicative potential, namely, the *IL-based CSs* were more effective in conveying the meaning of the concepts due to the fact that these CSs stated the needed information in an understandable way to the native speakers and left little room for misunderstanding. *Negotiation CSs* led to a joint enterprise between the learners who worked linguistically to resolve an impasse in communication and difficulty in message comprehensibility. SLA is thought to be facilitated through learners negotiating solutions to communication failures. CSs for negotiation of meaning helped learners a lot to accomplish their required task.

All the subjects are first-year bachelor students who just entered the

university for one term. Although some of the learners were categorized into the high proficiency ones, their English proficiency still cannot allow them to speak English without any problems. For this reason, they need to employ CSs to resolve their communication problems. This finding is not in agreement with Chen (1990) who found the HP learners needed fewer CSs to convey the meaning. The reason could be that the subjects were different as they were freshman students whereas those of Chen's research were graduate students whose English repertoire was much expanding.

In contrast, the more frequent *avoidance CSs* found in LP learners' speaking performance seemed not successful in communication, because the native speakers failed to figure out the learners' intended meaning. In addition, the limited English competence of the LP learners might also prevent the realization of some CSs in terms of grammatical accuracy and proper vocabulary.

5.3 Communication Strategies Used in the One-way Task and the Two-way Task

Kasper and Kellerman (1997) proposed that it is of crucial importance whether CSs are examined from an intra-individual view or an inter-individual view. The present study made an attempt to take into account both views so as to investigate CSs from a much more comprehensive perspective. In accordance with the two views, therefore, a one-way task and a two-way task are established to elicit students' use of CSs.

Considering that the goal of the study is to explore CSs in conveying meanings or in interaction, it is important to examine these CSs that were used by the

learners to facilitate communication while performing the two tasks. As suggested in the results (Section 4.4 and Table 4.11) of the study, the concept identification seemed to elicit more CSs in an intra-individual aspect while the role play elicited more CSs in an inter-individual aspect.

Nunan (2004) states that if learners are given some choice of what to say, and if there is a clear aim to be achieved by what they say in their descriptions and role plays, they may participate more willingly and learn more thoroughly than when they are told to simply repeat a given dialogue in pairs. According to the conditions set for the task and the direction of flow among learners, tasks were divided into one-way task and two-way task. In a one-way task, just one participant controls the flow of information. The other participant is involved by listening with no or very limited communication. On the other hand, two-way tasks involve interaction between two or more learners to achieve the goal of the task where both learners have equal rights to speak (Ellis, 2003). Others suggest that two-way tasks generally provide more opportunities for negotiation of meanings, unless the partner is allowed to ask for clarification in order to complete the task.

Concept identification is a one-way task adopted in the present study to elicit CSs from participants. Based on the research results of Chen (1990), the combination of both concrete and abstract concepts was hoped to lead to variation in CSs use. The aim of the task is to provide students with some information to get across to the English native speaker as a listener who requires that information. In this task, just one participant controls the flow of information. Because the students were not allowed to say the concept directly to the listener, they had to make use of CSs to beat around the bush until the listener could catch the meaning of the concept.

The findings of the study reveal that the CSs *paraphrase*, *generalization*, *repetition* and *restructuring* occurred most commonly in the one-way task of the present study. The CSs *paraphrase*, *generalization* and *restructuring* are based on a learner's IL system which is composed of the attempted production of a TL norm.

Generalization and *paraphrase* are commonly used together by students in the concept description. Examples can be shown in the following.

(30) S31: **It's a machine, um, the machine that we can use to do math problem.**

(31) S22: **It's a place where I live in and my classmates live in.**

(32) S5: **Um .. it is an animal and it lives in water and um it can be eaten by …**

Restructuring was another *IL-based strategy* used by students to convey their meaning to the listener such as:

(33) S24: **… When we surf the Internet, we also make it input some words. We make it input some words, input some words. …Um it's a part of computer.**

The strategy *repetition* occurred often in the one-way task, because students could not employ more effective CSs of elaboration but insist on repeating what they expressed. It is easy for students to resort to *repetition* in the process of conveying their meanings to the listener. It was also observed in the task that students use repetitions as gap fillers to gain more time to think (See chapter 4.3 for examples of *repetition*).

Role play in the study is a two-way task for the researcher to elicit CSs. Students had to solve some problems by negotiating their meanings. Since NNSs of a language often spend a great deal of time talking in class with other NNSs, it seems reasonable to investigate the nature of these interactions. Long (1983) found a greater

amount of modified interaction in two-way tasks as opposed to one-way tasks. Modified interaction involves a modification of the conversational structure itself, including a greater number of *confirmation checks*, *comprehension checks*, *clarification requests*, and so forth.

The condition of the two-way task led students to making use of the following CSs. The three CSs of *clarification request, positive confirmation checks* and *code-based confirmation check* appeared to be used most commonly in the two-way task of role play.

Clarification requests refer to any expressions used to elicit clarification of the interlocutor's preceding utterances. *Clarification requests* are mostly formed by questions but may consist wh- or yes-no questions (unlike *confirmation checks*). The examples of *clarification request* from this type of task are as follows:

(34) Customer: And it must be excellent, **ok**?

Shop Assistant: **Pardon**?

(35) Shop assistant: So your good is not in the time. Um … so so …

Customer: **What do you mean**?

(36) Customer: Can I … can I refund the camera?

Shop assistant: Yes, **what**?

The strategy of *positive confirmation check* was a second commonly used strategy by the subjects in this task, which were used to offer information for confirmation. When using this strategy, the learner, in order to check his understanding of the peer, provides the peer with information related to what the peer has said previously and gets confirmation of it. Here are the instances of *positive confirmation checks*:

(37) Shop assistant: … Would you tell me again what … **what items** you

bought?

(38) Shop assistant: You mean … your bother didn't like the color, **yes**?

(39) Shop assistant: You said you got some water on it, **right**?

The strategy of *code-based confirmation check* was another one used in the task third commonly by the subjects. *Code-based confirmation checks* were used to repeat the previous utterance of their peers for confirmation. The examples are as follows:

(40) Customer: But he doesn't like ⌈the color⌉.

Shop assistant: ⌈**the color**⌉?

(41) Customer: The camera was ⌈broken⌉.

Shop assistant: ⌈**broken**⌉?

(42) Shop assistant: What is the ⌈mark⌉?

Customer: ⌈**mark**⌉?

It was obvious that there exist the differences in employing CSs between the one-way task and the two-way task. In other words, different types of task led to the use of different CSs by students. The one-way task of concept description elicited a number of *IL-based CSs* as well as some *avoidance CSs* while the two-way task of role play derived many *negotiation CSs*. This finding accords fully with the two views seeing CSs as intra-individual or inter-individual events (Section 2.4). Kasper and Kellerman (1997) state that "the intra-individual view" widely held by early researchers in the field, considered communication strategies as underlying processes occurring in individual mind and importantly which did not have to engage the

interlocutor for resolution. On the other hand, "the inter-individual view" with Tarone as one of its main proponents took communication strategies as used by both the IL speaker and the interlocutor in attempt to reduce the distance between their linguistic knowledge.

Although *IL-based CSs* and *negotiation CSs* may have different functions in communication (see 5.3), they are both important in helping students resolve their communication problems and keep their communication going well. In our teaching, therefore, both tasks attempting to elicit different CSs need to be considered closely when we, as teachers, try to design or select speaking tasks for students.

In addition, the findings reveal that the students tended to use more *message abandonment* in the one-way task than in the two-way task, according to their significant difference in the frequencies. The explanation could be that students realized that they probably had no choice but to attempt to convey their meanings in front of the NSs even though they would stop in the mid-utterance. Also, it was quite interesting to notice that students used less *literal translation* in the one-way task than in the two-way task. There was a probable explanation that by facing their partners, students thought the strategy of *literal translation* could make their partners understand their inappropriate English. As a result, one of the reasons that different tasks elicited different CSs could partly depend on whether students' interlocutor is NNS or NS in communication.

The findings show that subjects were more successful in doing concept identification than in doing role play based on the mean scores of their success which had a significant difference. The subjects on the whole achieved higher scores in one-way task than in two-way task regarding their degree of success. One explanation

could be that subjects used these intra-individual CSs more successfully in conveying their meanings. In other words, these CSs brought about students' successful performance. Mainly included in the intra-individual CSs are *IL-based CSs* which was usually thought to be very helpful in the resolution of students' communication problems.

In contrast, the subjects did not resort to inter-individual CSs as successfully as when they did intra-individual CSs. It might be because *negotiation CSs* included in the intra-individual CSs were not fully used by the subjects in the role play. Besides, their consciousness of *negotiation CSs* may not to have been raised much yet. The findings suggested that students performed the role play not as successfully as they did the concept description. As a result, the learners and their peers were not very successful in repairing their communication breakdowns or ensuring their mutual comprehension of meaning. Pica (1995) pointed out that learners and their interlocutors find ways to communicate messages through negotiation, but not necessarily with target-like forms. Without sufficient target-like forms leading to the comprehensibility, students' performance was carefully examined for negotiation work.

In summary, intra-individual CSs including *IL-based CSs* helped students convey their meanings successfully while inter-individual CSs including *negotiation CSs* were not probably employed satisfactorily due to the insufficient forms leading to learners' comprehensibility.

5.4 Communication Strategies Used by Arts Students and Science Students

The subjects in this study include students from Science field of Computer Technology and Optics Information as well as students from Arts field of Chinese Language and Economics. All the subjects have almost the same English learning background no matter which field they are from. Similar learning background in the present study suggests that the Arts subjects and Science subjects are generally in the same situation of learning English; that is, they are in their first year of university study after taking a national entrance examination. Even so, it was found that the subjects have had differences in using CSs during their speaking tasks.

The research findings indicate that the CSs most frequently used by Science subjects were *paraphrase*, *clarification request*, *restructuring*, *message abandonment* and *repetition* while the CSs most frequently used by Arts subjects were *paraphrase*, *restructuring*, *repetition*, *generalization* and *clarification request* in order of frequency. It can be seen that both Arts students and Science students employ the CSs like *paraphrase, restructuring, repetition* and *clarification request* quite frequently. Science students seemed to use the strategy *message abandonment* more commonly than Arts students. Arts students, however, seemed to use the strategy of *generalization* more often than Science students.

The CSs *paraphrase, restructuring* and *clarification request* not only serve to overcome communication problems learners face but are also used by learners to create an open channel for more interactions or input. That these CSs could help learners keep their conversation going made it possible for them to accomplish their task finally. However, Science students more frequently resorted to the strategy

message abandonment, showing an attempt to communicate a meaning initially, which is aborted midstream. The IL structures of Science students sometimes seemed to be less adequate to convey their thought.

In addition, there was a significant difference in using the strategy *clarification request* between Arts students and Science students. Science students employed *clarification request* more frequently than Arts students. This may suggest that there appeared to be more communication breakdowns between the Science subjects who probably needed to interrupt the flow of communication in order for both parties to understand what the conversation is about. *Clarification requests* then were used by listeners to check if they have correctly comprehended the speakers' utterances. Thus more communication breakdowns between the subjects, more *clarification requests* seem to be needed.

However, no significant difference was found in employing the group CSs between Science and Arts students. The finding could be likely in the support of the situation that Science and Arts students are kept in the same English class and share English learning together.

It is generally believed that Science students think more logically than Arts students, which may benefit their English reading or writing more than their English speaking. On the other hand, Arts students are thought to have better interpersonal skills, which may benefit their speaking communication. As English teachers who teach both Science and Arts students, we need to consider the nature of these two different fields and take into account how learning situations may affect the use of communication strategies.

5.5 Communication Strategies Used by Male Students and Female Students

The male subjects outnumber the female subjects by five, which did not show any significant difference in the number between them through chi-square of SPSS. The findings reveal that both male students and female students employ the two strategies *paraphrase* and *restructuring* most frequently, which contribute greatly to learners' communication by paving away their communication obstacles. However, male students seemed apt to resort to *message abandonment* when they could not continue their message conveyance whereas female students seldom abandoned their message even they used *repetition* more often.

A significant difference has been found between male and female students in the use of two strategies *topic avoidance and comprehension check*. Male subjects adopt the two strategies significantly more frequently than female students. It was found that some male students made no attempt to describe the given concepts in face of difficulties. Some mimed a lot when they hesitated to speak and did not have appropriate fillers to fill in the interval silence. And they tended to check the comprehension by saying something like "do you know what I mean?" which suggests that they were uncertain about their words.

With regard to the four groups of CSs, there existed a significant difference between male students and female students in using the *avoidance* strategy. Male students resorted to *avoidance* more frequently than female students. It seems to suggest that generally speaking male students would rather avoid talking about some topics than taking risks in conveying their meanings in English. Moreover, males seemed not to have strong interpersonal communicative and social skills as females do.

The findings also reveal that female subjects were more successful than male subjects when they performed the two tasks, and there was a significant difference between them. This result is in line with the research conducted to examine the difference between males and females. Maccoby and Jacklin's (1974) psychological research has shown that females surpass males in verbal ability, both on tests of receptive and productive skills, and higher-level and lower-level tasks. Through performing the two tasks, female students were found to have achieved more scores than male students.

Oxford (1993) reported that female students employ learning strategies more frequently and effectively. Although the research is concerned with learning strategies, it can still make some references about CSs. The explanation could be that in language learning women are likely to be open to new linguistic forms in the L2 input and they will be more likely to stick to target language norms (Ellis, 1994). It may suggest that the IL system of female students allows them to resort to CSs frequently and to employ the CSs effectively.

However, Young and Oxford (1997) concluded that gender-based differences in strategic behavior might not reside in general categories i.e. *avoidance strategies* or *achievement strategies* etc, but rather at the level of specific strategies i.e. *generalization, approximation* or *restructuring* etc. It was suggested that the investigation on gender difference in terms of CSs use could place further emphasis on some specific CSs. The present study supported that the difference between male students and female students might be present at the level of some strategies and provided some implication for the future research.

The findings address that female students are more successful in doing the

two tasks where they employed these CSs effectively, which partly confirmed the research findings from Oxford (1993). The difference in the number of gender might be taken into account in classroom English teaching, particularly when students need to be put in different classes according to their placement test scores. English teachers who organize activities or design tasks for students to perform in class should think about the difference too.

5.6 Discussion on the Data from Questionnaire

After the subjects performed their two speaking tasks, they were administered a questionnaire to investigate whether they recognize their use of CSs. A comparison between results from the speaking tasks and results from the questionnaire call attention to the following similarities and differences.

Such CSs as *restructuring, clarification request, generalization* and *paraphrase* were found very commonly both in speaking tasks and in the questionnaire. This finding can support the results coming out of the speaking tasks, which claimed that subjects employed *restructuring*, *generalization* and *paraphrase* very frequently in the one-way task and used *clarification request* the most often in the two-way task. The strategy *restructuring* can offer the subjects the ways to give examples to their instructors if s/he does not understand the meaning. Learners often resorted to the strategy *generalization* in the questionnaire the same as they reported in the speaking task. *Paraphrase* as one of the frequently occurring strategies in the speaking task was also reported by the subjects in the questionnaire to be often used. Making requests for clarification seems to be important in that whenever possible, *clarification requests* are used to pose effective and informative questions. After

assessing carefully learners' strategy use in actual learning events like in this study, it is important to choose appropriate strategies for pedagogical purposes. However, the strategy *word coinage* was found rarely both in speaking tasks and in the questionnaire. This triangulated finding could be in accordance with the fact that learners seldom resorted to this strategy.

Two exceptions should be mentioned here. One is that in the questionnaire, subjects reported they used *comprehension checks* quite often whereas in the speaking tasks, subjects were found to use this strategy not very frequently. This exception was likely to be related to the nature of the two-way task, which was performed between NNS and NNS and there appeared not much need to check comprehension. The other is that in the questionnaire, the subjects reported that they employed *language switch* less commonly while in the two kinds of speaking tasks *language switch* was found commonly. This supported the research that participants may underestimate their use of negative behaviors on a questionnaire (Cohen, 1998; Vermetten, Vermunt & Lodewijks, 1999). Probably participants in the current study thought *language switch* is a sort of negative strategy which may suggest their English was poor and they had to use Chinese instead of English.

In terms of the proficiency, both the questionnaire and the speaking tasks reveal that the high proficiency subjects resorted to the two CSs *approximation* and *language switch* significantly different from the low proficiency subjects. The high proficiency subjects employed *approximation* more frequently than low proficiency subjects while the low proficiency subjects used *language switch* more frequently than high proficiency subjects. *Approximation* as one of *IL-based CSs* is helpful to give some hints to the intended referent. Learners found it easy to employ this

strategy to serve in place of the more accurate term. *Language switch* as one of the *L1-based CSs* was preferred by low proficiency subjects particularly in actual speaking tasks.

As for these CSs like *paraphrase, literal translation, comprehension check* and *reformulation,* which show significant differences between HP and LP groups in the questionnaire, the speaking tasks did not include any significant difference between them. The explanation could be that although subjects reported they used or did not use some CSs, in the actual discourse data they were found to perform differently from what they self-reported in the questionnaire.

Let's turn the attention to the difference between genders. We came up with a different finding from the questionnaire, which reveals there were significant differences between male and female students in using *restructuring* and *reformulation.* This finding was not the same at all with the one from the actual speaking tasks. Certainly some factors which may affect the use of CSs must be considered very closely, for example what kinds of tasks are used to elicit CSs and who acts as the learners' interlocutors, NNS or NS.

In short, the results from the questionnaire validated the data from the speaking tasks by triangulation and could finally reach a more complete and reliable finding. Another method of semi-structured interview also generated some deeper findings concerning learners' strategy use.

5.7 Discussion on the Data from Semi-structured Interview

In the study a semi-structured interview was conducted to elicit in-depth information about the use of CSs from the subjects, right after the subjects completed

the questionnaire. The researcher, as their English teacher required the interviewees to check what they have ticked in their own questionnaire when they were attempting to answer the questions in the interview. There are totally 24 students randomly selected to be interviewed. Three questions were used to interview all the 24 subjects in Chinese.

5.7.1 Are you aware that you employ various CSs to deal with communication difficulties while you are speaking English?

All the interviewees reported that they made use of CSs to solve their communication problems in speaking English. However, they did not realize that the term *communication strategies* referred to the ways they used to resolve their communication problems. After they answered the questionnaire, they became somewhat conscious of CSs use, which may benefit their future English speaking.

A few high proficiency students (interviewees) told the researcher that sometimes they tried to get themselves through communication difficulties by coining new words. Interestingly, this finding can be supplementary to those from questionnaire and speaking tasks. The interview shows two examples as *beautiful fishwoman* for *mermaid*, and *flower powder* for *pollen*. The strategy of *word coinage* used here could be said successful because the NS as interlocutor understood the meaning and offered the correct word instead.

The questionnaire and interview were able to make the students recognize they did use CSs in their English speaking and then it was likely for them to start to have a sort of idea about the meanings of these strategies.

However, some of the interviewees mentioned that their attempt at paraphrasing words led to decreasing the meanings of these words. The paraphrased

meanings were not exactly equal to their original ones. It could be said that some students did realize that they have been using the strategy *paraphrase*, but sometimes it seemed to be not so satisfactory as they expected. Therefore, in the future study, students' awareness should be raised on how to use the strategy of *paraphrase* appropriately and meaningfully. .

5.7.2. What CSs do you choose when you are working on concept identification and role play? Can you make it clear what CSs they are?

In the role play task, during their conversations with peers they found that some CSs like *confirmation check, clarification check, comprehension check and reformulation* were useful for them to keep their conversations going smoothly. Some of the low proficiency students tended to talk with their peers in Chinese while they could not find suitable English words. In contrast, they still tried to stick to English even by repetitions in the task of concept identification while facing English native speakers. Whether or not the transfer of *L1-based CSs* might be used depended on the interlocutor who was learners' peer or an English native speaker, which is in accordance with the findings from the speaking tasks (See 5.3).

The findings of the interview showed differences between NNS and NNS or between NNS and NS. Talking with English NS, learners felt that there existed differences in terms of cultural background. Talking with learners' peers, however, they felt that they could understand each other much better and even sometimes they realized their English was not standard and appropriate.

All the interviewees admitted that asking for assistance is a sort of CS employed by almost all of the interviewees no matter who their interlocutors are. *Confirmation* and *comprehension checks* are often used to pave the way for learners'

communication. These CSs were used when a low proficiency learner interacted with a high proficiency learner or when a Chinese student interacted with an English native speaker.

Although students have learned English for more than six years, in the process of learning they are not exposed enough to authentic English. They particularly have not had enough chance to speak English in real-life situations. While communicating with English native speakers, students feel nervous and afraid that their communication cannot go smoothly and embarrassment may happen.

Almost all the interviewees agreed that in face-to-face communication they frequently resorted to non-verbal CSs such as *mime, gesture and eye expression* etc. Non-verbal CSs were often used to support verbal CSs when learners attempted to solve some of their communication problems. An important function (found in this study) of non-verbal CSs was to signal an appeal to the interlocutor. This finding is in agreement with that of Faerch and Kasper (1983). The researcher herself was present on this occasion and made notes about this. Although non-verbal CSs were noticed in the students' performance, the taxonomy of the present study did not include them. The future research may consider non-verbal CSs as well.

Judging from the two tasks and the interview data, the researcher could figure out that those students who speak English more fluently and clearly were considered risk-takers. They were not afraid of taking risks to speak English even though they might come across kinds of communication problems. They, as risk-takers, always tried to reach their communication goals by resorting to different CSs.

5.7.3. While speaking English, your mother tongue (Chinese) can have any effects on your choice of CSs? Can you give some examples?

Even for most of the high proficiency students, they still could not think in English. When they tried to speak some complicated structures in English, they still started by thinking in their mother tongue of Chinese. On the contrary, when they expressed some simple and short structures in English, they could make them directly.

Low proficiency students, generally speaking, had more pronunciation problems when they tried to express themselves. The failure to communicate with English interlocutors was partly due to their inaccurate pronunciation. In the interview some low proficiency students mentioned that they needed to improve their English pronunciation in order to be understood better.

In addition, during the interview almost all of the students thought that their communication problems were partly due to their insufficient vocabulary. How teachers help students improve their learning vocabulary strategy needs to be considered, although it is out of the scope of the present study. Interviewees did not address so much about the effects of Chinese on the CSs choice.

In short, the interview suggested that learners' motivation to learn English may be stimulated after they have stronger awareness of CSs employment and do find that CSs can be helpful in their spoken communications.

5.8 Conclusion

This section begins with the summary of the present study, followed by pedagogical implications, limitations and suggestions for the future research study.

5.8.1 Summary of the Study

Communication strategies have been investigated in abundance so far, but most of the studies have focused on either interactional aspect or cognitive aspect of strategies separately. Few have been conducted to combine the two aspects together. The main aim of the study is an investigation of the CSs use by Chinese EFL learners interacting with their peers or an English native speaker in two different kinds of task. The research also aims at studying whether there are any differences concerning students' proficiency level, task type, academic field and gender when students employ various CSs.

The data consists of more than ten hours of output recording from 117 students majoring in Arts and Science, who are in their first year study of the university. After the subjects were divided into high and low proficiency level, a series of instruments were used to elicit data including two kinds of task, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The data was then analyzed with the purpose of identifying the CSs used and their frequency of occurrence. This analysis was guided by a taxonomy of CSs developed for the present study and adapted from several taxonomies from the previous studies. The reliability of the classification of CSs was established through the inter-rater technique in which a sample of CSs was analyzed by two judges (in addition to the researcher herself).

The findings of the study can be summarized as the following:

1. Both the high and low proficiency students resorted to the same type of CSs. *Paraphrase* and *restructuring* were the most two common types of communication strategies used by all the students mainly in the one-way task when they came across difficulties in expressing

themselves in the target language. This reflects the fact that the students were more or less able to deal with the tasks assigned because their linguistic competence provided them with certain English foundation. All of them have learned English at least more than six years and could enter the university after passing their NSMT including the subject of English.

2. There were significant differences between the high and low proficiency students in their use of certain CSs. The high proficiency students used the two CSs of *generalization* and *approximation* significantly more often than the low proficiency students. *IL-based CSs* were further found to be the group used significantly more often by the high proficiency students. In contrast, the low proficiency students used the CSs of *topic avoidance*, *message abandonment* and *language switch* more often than the high proficiency students. *Avoidance CSs* were further found to be the group of CSs used significantly more often by the low proficiency students. Furthermore, high proficiency students were more successful than low proficiency students in getting their meanings across and negotiating their meanings. In other words, the *IL-based CSs* were probably effective in conveying the meanings of the concepts.

3. The CSs investigated were used by the students in the one-way task and the two-way task to significantly varying degrees. The CSs *paraphrase*, *generalization*, *repetition* and *restructuring* occurred most commonly in the one-way task while the three CSs *clarification*

request, positive confirmation check and *code-based confirmation check* appeared to be the most commonly used ones in the two-way task. In other words, the one-way task of concept description elicited more *IL-based CSs* as well as *avoidance CSs* while the two-way task of role play derived more *negotiation CSs*. In addition, subjects were more successful in doing concept identification than in doing role play. *IL-based CSs* used by students in the one-way task were very helpful in solving students' communication problems.

4. There was a significant difference between Arts students and Science students in their use of *clarification request*. Science students employed the strategy *clarification request* more frequently than Arts students. More importantly, there was no significant difference between Arts students and Science students in their success of completing the tasks, which means either Arts students or Science students performed the two tasks without much difference in their communication success.

5. Significant differences were found between male students and female students in the use of two strategies of *topic avoidance* and *comprehension check*. Male students employed the two strategies more commonly than female students. Furthermore, there was a significant difference between male students and female students in the use of the group strategy of *avoidance*. Male students used avoidance more often than female students. Interestingly, female students were more successful than male students in performing the

two tasks to further support that females surpass males in verbal ability.

6. In addition to the preceding factors, the language distance between the learners' L1 and L2 was also found to affect their strategy use. There were few *L1-based CSs* used by Chinese EFL learners of both high and low proficiency due to the lack of similarity between Chinese and English.

7. Concerning the instruments adopted in the present study to collect data, the questionnaire and semi-structured interview are another two ways used to triangulate the data coming from the actual speaking tasks. In taking advantage of the two instruments, however, a researcher must be careful to analyze the questionnaire data since subjects might report their use of negative behaviors under estimation. Furthermore, semi-structured interview can offer very valuable and in-depth data to support or supplement the results from speaking tasks as well as those from the questionnaire.

5.8.2 Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the study are considered to have some possible pedagogical implications concerning communication as follows.

1. The first of these implications is drawn from the whole premise on which the study is based, namely, inter-individual interaction and intra-individual interaction. Two kinds of task for eliciting CSs are rooted in the two kinds of interaction. Both one-way tasks and two-way tasks are information exchange tasks which depend on the information

held by a single person or between two or more people. The curriculum design needs to take the two kinds of task into consideration so as to help teachers diversify their classroom activities and students develop their strategic competence. Such tasks are viewed as devices for generating interaction involving L2 learners and then for affecting the development of their communicative competence through interaction. Therefore, it seems possible that Chinese EFL learners can develop their communicative competence by increasing their strategic competence through various tasks performed in class or even outside class.

2. Communication strategies are an important component of strategic competence, namely the competence required to make effective use of one's linguistic and pragmatic resources. Concerning the relationship between task and language use, the aspect of communication strategies is one of the major avenues of enquiry which have been explored by many researchers. Since CSs are used to resolve communication problems, our curriculum should be designed to pose problems and incorporate ways to deal with them. Properly developed tasks can serve this purpose by asking learners to resolve the problems and including strategy training in actual language teaching.

3. Of the *IL-based strategies* there is a clear preference for *paraphrase* and *restructuring* which have been found to be used very frequently by the learners in the study. *Paraphrase* is used by EFL learners both to avoid unknown lexical items and to introduce new ones. Teachers also use *paraphrase* in teaching which is a useful way of lexical simplification, if

used skillfully. Therefore, teachers' skillful use of *paraphrase* can be a good example for students to follow. The use *restructuring* shows that learners make a succession of statements and produce more utterances. The strategy of learners' *restructuring* could be used together with *paraphrase* to get the learner's meanings across in a more understandable way. These two CSs can be included in the curriculum when teachers are considering what kinds of CSs should be taught to their students.

4. *Clarification request* is one negotiation strategy which has been found to appear frequently in the study. Learners tend to use this strategy to make clarifications of the preceding utterance when they interact with their peers in the two-way task. Learners resort to this strategy to keep their conversation going by paving away some communication obstacles. Generally speaking, the learners in the study did not employ enough CSs to negotiate their meanings and that is why these learners seemed to be not as successful in the two-way task as they were in the one-way task. Therefore, negotiation of meaning should be given a lot of attention because it provides an opportunity for what Swain (1985) has called pushed output, i.e. output that reflects what learners can produce when they are pushed to use the target language accurately and concisely. Ellis states (2003) that if both interlocutors in the exchanges are language learners, negotiation can provide them with both comprehensible input and opportunities for pushed output.

5. Included in communicative competence in an L2 as a main component, strategic competence can help one get the meaning across successfully to

partners in conversation, especially when problems arise in the communication process and the interlanguage system seems unequal to the task. Strategic competence is then a kind of ability to compensate for learners' insufficient knowledge of that L2. The results in the present study suggest that CSs make up the integral part of learners' interlanguage and linguistic behaviors considering that almost all the participants in the present study have never aroused the awareness of CSs before. CSs are ways to enable learners to cope with their inadequate knowledge of the L2. The importance of strategic competence, therefore, should be recognized and attention should be called to teaching students the ways to cope with communication problems. This view concerning communicative competence and the results on the learners' use of CSs, indicates that it is reasonable for English teachers to build into their instruction the element through which the learners could develop their strategic competence. However, in China this is not the case in the EFL context, because so far the materials containing CSs seem still largely absent in the teaching textbooks.

6. The finding of the research seems to suggest one way of assessing learners' communicative competence, that is, to include strategic competence in the evaluation of learners' proficiency, particularly speaking proficiency, if strategic competence is an integral part of communicative competence and if CSs are a useful medium to demonstrate this strategic competence. Speaking tasks should be considered closely to evaluate learners' speaking performance. Ellis was

the one among many researchers who have started to help language teacher assess their students in the classroom by setting a base for evaluating their strategic competence. More practical and creative efforts in assessment of tasks should be encouraged in the future.

5.8.3 Limitations and Suggestions for the Future Studies

The present study attempts to shed some light on the use of CSs by Chinese EFL learners when they perform one-way and two-way tasks. While the findings of the present study undoubtedly contribute to the understanding of the CSs, it has merely scratched the surface of some of the issues concerning CSs in terms of syntax, reception and the variables. More empirical research on the relationship between communication strategies and pedagogical issues needs to be done to modify or supplement the findings of the study.

First, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to all Chinese EFL learners since the number of subjects was limited; the controlled communicative tasks, namely, one-way task and two-way tasks encouraged the use of most CSs and still discouraged some others; the judgment of the communicative success in the learners' use of CSs needed to be further improved.

Second, this study makes an attempt to investigate CSs use in both an intra-individual interaction and an inter-individual interaction. To my best knowledge, research on the inter-individual interaction which focuses on negotiation of meaning is still scant especially in China while the intra-individual interaction seems to have been widely investigated. More studies are needed to examine the inter-individual aspect of communication in the future, or to combine the two aspects together to achieve a comprehensive investigation.

Third, the choice of CSs and the success in using them are affected by a variety of factors. To the best of my knowledge, this study made a first attempt to take four factors into consideration, namely, proficiency level, task type, academic field and gender as well. Besides, the results of the study seem to indicate that two other important factors are worth studying further, namely, learners' previous learning situation and personality. Those who have had more exposure to the target language or real-life communication can be more successful in employing CSs. Also, those who are extroverts and tend to take risks in speaking English are likely to make the most and best use of their limited linguistic repertoire. When those learners interact with English native speakers they could generate more input and have more chances to practice their use of CSs. However, one interesting challenge from Chen's work shows that students seemed to use less CSs when their proficiency reached a higher level. Therefore, still more factors in the future need to be investigated with regard to CSs employment.

Fourth, the research on the use of CSs by L2 learners has treated L2 communication as an isolated phenomenon, although there is a long tradition of research on L1 communication (Bongaerts & Poulisse, 1989). There is a need to compare CSs in learners' L1 and L2 to investigate if certain linguistic features of learners' conversational behaviors in one language are carried over into another language. This work could be done in a relatively natural context where learners are interviewed by their teachers both in Chinese and English about course-related issues, for example, to see if there are any similarities or differences between their use of CSs in L1 and L2. Cross-cultural communication probably can provide some ground theories for this kind of research which tends to compare L1 with L2.

Fifth, the present study mainly deals with verbal CSs in the target language. A study with video recording as the main way to collect data can also investigate those non-verbal CSs so that we can look at both verbal and non-verbal CSs and compare the findings with those found in a study concerning verbal CSs only.

Sixth, another research suggestion has to do with the taxonomy of CSs. The present study tended to develop a comprehensive taxonomy by modifying the existing taxonomies in the literature. This taxonomy makes an attempt to combine those CSs from two perspectives of intra-individual interaction and inter-individual interaction, and take into account of *avoidance CSs, L1-based CSs, IL-based CSs* and *negotiation CSs*. Although these CSs make a lot of sense and describe interesting behaviors, they remain to be replicated in future research and taxonomies of CSs probably should be adjusted to the needs of the researcher.

Seventh, to my best knowledge, a follow-up questionnaire and semi-structured interview are firstly adopted in the CSs research in order that the researcher can obtain further and deeper understanding of those subjects' behaviors in employing CSs. Although the questionnaire is not the main instrument in the present study, it still can lead to a small-scale survey focusing on the reported CSs of the study. If any future research aims to develop a questionnaire to survey CSs use, its reliability and validity need to be considered closely. Furthermore, it is interesting and beneficial in CSs research to conduct a follow-up interview in which some subjects were asked to make comments on how they coped with their communication problems, if they were aware of their CSs use and satisfied with their solutions to the communication difficulties. This method of retrospection in the future research should be called close attention to, because it can provide better findings and insights into the use of CSs.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

I would like to ask you to help me by answering the following questions concerning communication in English. This survey is conducted to investigate whether you know and use some strategies in your conversation while you lack linguistic knowledge. This is not a test and there is no "wrong" or "right" answer. I am just interested in your personal opinion and behavior. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation. The results will not be publicly posted or shared with others, will not be compared with the results of any other individual students, will not be used for grading or for any negative purpose, and will be used only to help you become better learners. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Part A: Background Information

Directions: In the following section, you are asked to put a tick in the box which you choose and answer the questions in a few words.

1. Name:

2. Gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female

3. Major: ☐ Arts   ☐ Science

4. English Score of NSMT:

5. Have you participated in any program or course focusing on spoken English? If "yes", please specify:

6. Have you known anything about strategies which you can use to solve communication difficulties? If "yes", please specify:

Part B: Behavioral Questions about Communication Strategies

Directions: In the following section, after each item you are asked to put a tick in the box by choosing from **Yes or No**.

	Yes	No
1. When I don't know an English item, e.g. "pollution", I simply try not to talk about concepts for it.		
2. I begin to talk about a concept, e.g. "equal opportunity", but unable to continue and stop in mid-utterance.		
3. I preserve the "topic" e.g. of running sports, but refer to it by means of a more general expression.		
4. I assume that my original goal can be reached by using a generalized item, e.g. "animals" for "rabbits".		
5. When meeting an unknown word, I choose to describe the object, e.g. "the thing you open wine bottles with" for "corkscrew".		
6. I give examples if the listener does not understand what I am saying.		
7. I create a new word, e.g. "airball" for "balloon".		
8. I develop an alternative plan which enables me to communicate my intended message without reduction, e.g. getting around the word "daughter" by restructuring the utterance: "…my parents have I have er four elder sisters…"		
9. When coming across difficulties in conversation, I use items which are incorrect but share something common with the correct one, e.g. "fish" for "carp".		
10. I repeat what I want to say until the listener understands.		

	Yes	No
11. I think first of what I want to say in my native language and then translate that into the English sentence, e.g. producing "He invites me to drink".		
12. When I cannot remember something in English, I use Chinese words instead during my communication.		
13. If I cannot remember something, I directly ask for assistance from others, e.g. "what's this"?		
14. If I cannot remember something, I do not request assistance, but show the need for help by means of a pause, eye gaze etc.		
15. When I attempt to confirm that the listener has understood what I have said, I use utterances like "Understand?" or "Do you know what I mean?"		
16. I reformulate or model the previous speaker's utterances by using examples like "So you are saying…" or "You mean…"		
17. I replace the original message with another message because of feeling incapable of executing my original intent.		
18. When I fail to understand the speaker, I ask him/her "What do you mean?" or say "Sorry, I didn't understand".		

问卷调查

　　请您回答以下关于英语交际的一些问题。本调查目的是了解当您在缺乏某些英语语言知识的时候，是否知道并使用策略来帮助自己完成交际任务。研究人员保证所有结果只用于研究工作，以期能帮助您提高英语交际能力。此问卷不是测试，所以没有"对""错"之分和分数的评判。请您如实并认真的给出自己的答案，这将有助于本研究的圆满成功。非常感谢您的合作！

第一部分：个人背景资料

请在所选的方框里面打√ 并且简单回答问题。

　　1．姓名：

　　2．性别：□ 女　　□ 男

　　3．专业：□ 文科　　□ 理科

　　4．高考英语成绩：

　　5．你是否曾经参加过任何专门训练口语的培训班？如果是，请简单说明：

　　6．你是否知道交际策略可以帮助你克服一些交际困难？如果是，请简单举例说明：

第二部分：有关交际策略的问题

请从每个陈述后面的 2 个应答中选择一个，并在相应的方框里打√。每个应答为：正确或不正确。

	正确	不正确
1. 当我不知道某一英语单词时，如"污染"（pollution），我就尽量不去谈论有关它的一些观点。		
2. 我开始谈论某一概念，如"机会均等"（equal opportunity），但不能继续下去，于是说着说着便停住了。		
3. 我谈话时虽然保留住了话题（topic），如关于跨栏运动，却用另一种广泛的方式来说它，如一般的体育运动。		
4. 我以为我用一个非具体的单词，如用"动物"来代替"兔子"（"animals" for "rabbits"）可以达到我原来的交际目的。		
5. 当我碰到不知道的单词，我决定描述它，如用 "the thing you open wine bottles with" 来描述 "corkscrew".		
6. 当对方不知道我说什么时，我会举例说明。		
7. 我会创造一个新词，如 "airball" for "balloon".		
8. 我用重新构建的方式来传达我本来的意思，而且不会造成意思上的缩减，如我重构此句 "my parents have I and I have four elder sisters" 来说明 "daughter" 这个单词。		
9. 我在交谈时碰到困难，会用一个不正确的单词来代替原词，但此词跟原词有些共同点，如 "fish" for "carp".		
10. 我会重复我想说的内容直到对方理解。		

	正确	不正确
11. 我先用母语思维，然后再一字一句翻译成英语，如从"他请我喝酒" 到 "He invites me to drink".		
12. 当我记不起某些英语时，我会用中文来代替。		
13. 我如果记不起某些英语，我会直接求助对方，如我会问 "what's this?".		
14. 我如果记不起某些英语，我不会直接求助，而是用停顿，眼神来表达这种需要。		
15. 当我想确认对方是否理解我所说的，我用 "Understand?" or "Do you know what I mean?"		
16. 我重新构建对方的言语来确定我是否理解了他（她）的意思，如用 "So you are saying…" or "You mean…"		
17. 我用另外不同的意思来代替原先的意思，因为感觉我不能表达我的本意。		
18. 当我不理解对方的言语时，我会问"你的意思是什么？" 或者"对不起，我不明白你的意思。"		

APPENDIX 2

大学英语四级考试口语考试样题

CET Spoken English Test Band 4

Sample Paper

<div align="right">

Topic A - 1

</div>

Topic Area: City Life

Topic: City Traffic

Part 1 (5 minutes)

Examiner:

> Good morning (Good afternoon), everybody. Could you please tell me your name and the number of your admission ticket? Your name, please. And your number? … Your name? … And your number? ... Thank you.

> Now would you please briefly introduce yourselves to each other? Remember, you should *not* mention the name of your university. (1.5 minutes)

> **OK, now that we know each other we can do some group work. First of all, I'd like to ask each of you to say something about life in the city.**
>
> [*C1, C2, C3*]
>
> **1) How do you like living in Beijing (Shanghai, Nanjing …)?**
>
> **2) What do you think is the most serious challenge of living in a city like Beijing (Shanghai, Nanjing …)?**
>
> **3) How do you like shopping in a supermarket?**
>
> **4) Where would you like to live, downtown or in the suburbs, and why?**

5) **What measures do you think we should take to reduce air pollution in Beijing (Shanghai, Nanjing …)?**

6) **Can you say something about the entertainment available in your city?**

7) **Where would you like to find a job after graduation, in a big city like Beijing or Shanghai or in a small town and why?**

8) **What's your impression of the people in Beijing (Shanghai, Nanjing …)?**

Part 2 (10 minutes)

Examiner:

Now let's move on to something more specific. The topic for our discussion today is "City Traffic". You'll have a picture (some pictures) showing two different types of transport. I'd like each of you to give a brief description of each type and then compare the two types. You'll have one minute to prepare and each of you will have one and a half minutes to talk about the picture(s). Don't worry if I interrupt you at the end of the time limit. Now here are your pictures.

[1 minute later]

Now, [*C1*], would you please start first? [*C2*] and [*C3*], please put your pictures aside and listen to what [*C1*] has to say.

[1.5 minutes later] **OK. [*C2*], now it's your turn.**

[1.5 minutes later] **OK, [*C3*], and now it's your turn.**

Right. Now we all have some idea of various kinds of city transport. I'd like you to discuss this topic further and see if you can agree on which is the best type of transport for a big city like Beijing (Shanghai, Nanjing …). During the discussion you may argue with each other or ask each other questions to clarify a point. You will have about four and a half minutes for the discussion. Your performance will be judged according to your contributions to the discussion.

[If one candidate talks too long]

Sorry, I'll have to stop you now. Let's listen to what [*C?*] has to say.

[If one candidate keeps silent for a long time] / [If the group is silent for some time,

then ask one of the candidates to start the discussion.]

Now, [*C?*], could you please say something about your view of …?

[4.5 minutes later]

All right, that's the end of the discussion.

Part 3 (5 minutes)

Examiner:

Now I'd like to ask you just one last question on the topic of "City Traffic".

[Select a question from the following list to ask each of the candidates.]

[*C1 or C2 or C3*]

• **During the discussion, why did you say that ... ?**

• **What kind of transport do you usually use in your city?**

• **Do you have any suggestions as to how traffic conditions can be improved in big cities?**

• **Do you think private cars should be encouraged?**

• **Why do you think some Western countries encourage people to ride bicycles?**

Now, that's the end of the test. Thank you, everybody.

private car

taxi
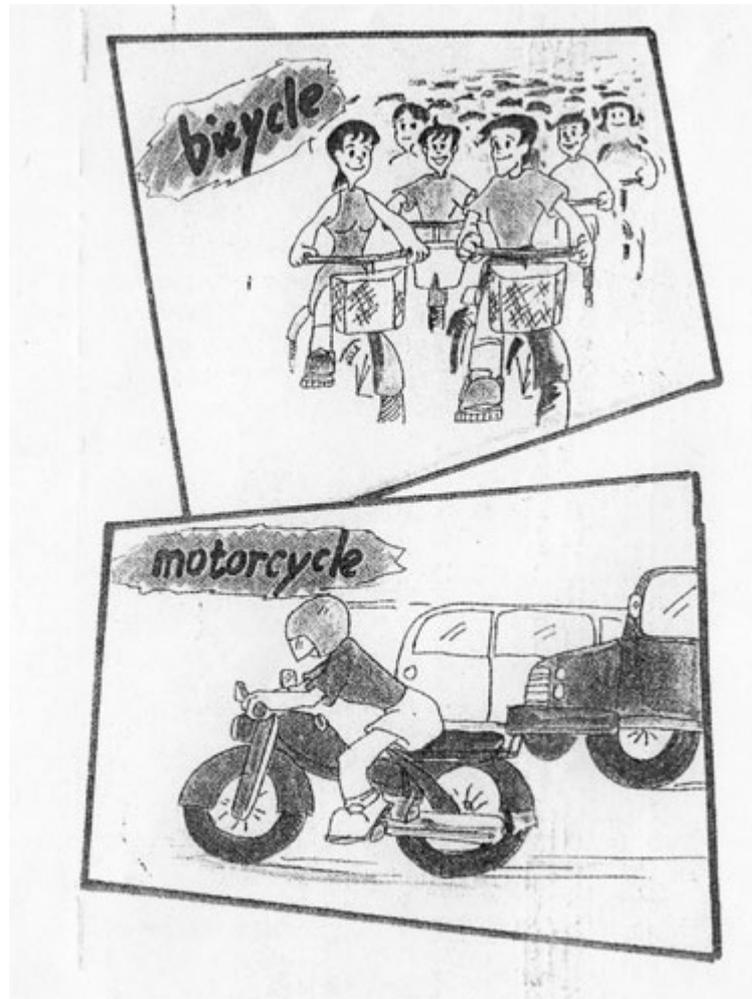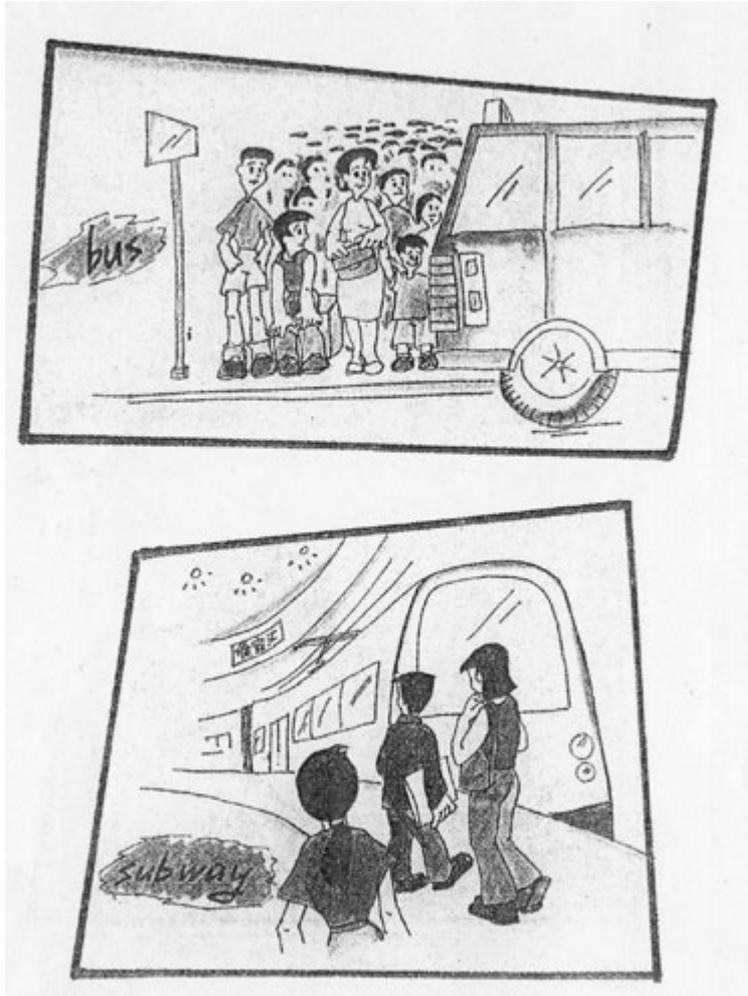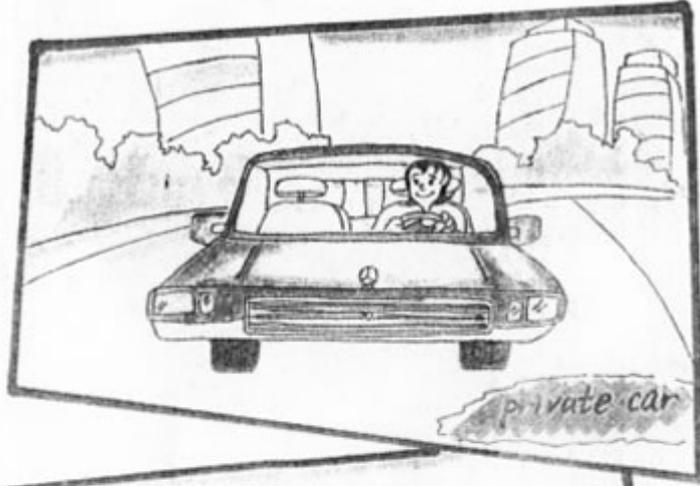
APPENDIX 3

CONCEPT IDENTIFICATION

Directions: The following are 32 concrete concepts and 32 abstract concepts for you to choose from. Please decide one from each column respectively and report them within three minutes.

Concrete Concepts		Abstract Concepts	
Zebra	Camel	Friendship	Peace
Computer	Radio	Freedom	Trust
Crab	Peacock	Intelligence	Attitude
Goose	Crocodile	Embarrassment	Kindness
Mushroom	Willow	Loneliness	Courage
Sunflower	Chimney	Motivation	Sensitivity
Garage	Mailbox	Confidence	Loyalty
Fireplace	Pond	Imagination	Bravery
Sea horse	Fridge	Misfortune	Justice
Armchair	Fountain	Curiosity	Grief
Greenhouse	Balloon	Relaxation	Honesty
Dormitory	Keyboard	Experience	Culture
Monkey	Piano	Tolerance	Mercy
Envelope	Kite	Selfishness	Responsibility
Airplane	Temple	Generosity	Destiny
Calculator	Curtain	Sympathy	Progress

APPENDIX 4

ROLE PLAY

Shop service role cards – Try - Activities © BBC | British Council 2004
www.teachingenglish.org.uk

Directions: The following are two role plays for you to choose from with the requirements. Your partner and you have to decide on your roles before playing it, namely, who acts as a shop assistant or a customer respectively. Then you have about ten minutes to prepare for it.

Shop Service Role Play: Materials

Role-play cards:

 Shop assistant

 Customer, option 1 and 2

Returned goods policy form (optional – the shop assistants could use their own paper)

Role Play 1

Receipt

Date:14/09/04

Time: 11:32

Shirt, red . . .£25.99

Camera £79.95

Total £105.94

Customer

• You bought two items from a shop but there is a problem with both of them.

• The shirt was for your brother's birthday but he doesn't like the colour.

• After you took the camera to the beach, you discovered it was broken.

• You want your money back!

Explain the problem to the shop assistant and use the receipt to answer the shop assistant's questions.

Role Play 2

Receipt

Date:03/10/04

Time: 10:05

T-shirt, large. £8.99

TV £115.95

Total £124.94

Customer

• You bought two items from a shop but there is a problem with both of them.

• The T-shirt was for your dad's birthday but it is too big for him.

• The picture on the TV is bad (especially after you got water on it).

• You want your money back!

Explain the problem to the shop assistant and use the receipt to answer the shop assistant's questions.

Role Play 1 & 2

Shop Assistant

You are a shop assistant. You need to listen to the customer's complaint.

Find out:

• What items the customer bought

• When they bought them

• What the problems with the items are

Your manager doesn't like giving people their money back. Try to find a different solution!

Returned Goods Policy

These are the rules for customers who want to return goods:

Receipt – (example – They must bring the receipt with them.)

Number of days –

Broken –

Don't like it –

Used it

APPENDIX 5

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A semi-structured interview is conducted to elicit further and detailed information about choice of CSs, particularly *L1-based CSs*. The following are questions for the semi-structured interview:

1. Are you aware that you employ various CSs to deal with communication difficulties while you are speaking English?

2. What CSs do you choose when you are working on concept identification and role play? Can you make it clear what CSs they are?

3. While speaking English, your mother tongue (Chinese) can have any effects on your choice of CSs? Can you give some examples?

APPENDIX 6

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Symbol	Name	Function
[ ]	brackets	beginning or ending of overlapping utterances
( )	parentheses	unclear words/sounds
?	question mark	rising intonation
.	period	falling intonation
..	2 dots	a pause less than 5 seconds
…	3 dots	a pause more than 5 seconds
,	comma	indicate continuation
	bold	CS use
	italic	incorrect use of words

APPENDIX 7

A SAMPLE OF SPEAKING TASK TRANSCRIPTION

Concept Identification Task

Interviewer: Matt Mcneely

Interviewee: S2 (Liu Mengchuan from HP Arts)

Date: May 31ˢᵗ, 2008

Time: 9:00am

Place: Guizhou University

S2: Hi.

M: Hi.

S2: Ok, this is my Chinese name.

M: (Laugh) Thank you.

S2: Ok, the first word.

M: Oh, yes.

S2: **This is a machine. And .. you can use it to surf the Internet.**

M: A computer.

S2: Yes, very good.

M: Very nice.

S2: And next word, um **if you are in …prison, and you hope it, which means you can do what you want to do ..**

M: Free time.

S2: No, no, no. **Very close. You are in prison and you hope it. You can do what you want.**

M: You, you, you hope it? You hold it

S2: **Ye, you hope it you, wish to have it.**

M: You wish to have it. Um, freedom.

S2: Yes, very good.

M: Ok, good, that's very good.

S2: Bye bye.

M: Bye bye. That's very good. She has very good English. Ok yes, yes, all of them come in with very good English.

Interviewer: Laurein Paige Link

Interviewee: S4 (Zhang Qiong from LP Arts)

Date: May 31st, 2008

Time: 9:00am

Place: Guizhou University

S4: And **this is a small machine.** And sometimes **I listen to some program from this machine, em, em ..**

L: Mp3 player?

S4: Another word. **For example, this is BBC.**

L: Television?

S4: Another one.

L: TV?

S4: No. **Small machine .. er .. em ... sometimes we can, at morning, [at morning]**

L: Radio?

S4: Yes, yes. Thank you.

L: Ok.

S4: The second is, em .. this word, we can, we can *means*, it means believing (just the sound). And, em ...

L: Faith?

S4: Another?

L: Faith?

S4: No, no, no. **I believe you are a good person and believe you.**

L: Er .. trust?

S4: Yes. This is the word. Thank you. Bye-bye.

L: Bye.

Interviewer: Josh Helmes

Interviewee: S14 (Meng Yuan from HP Science)

Date: May 31ˢᵗ, 2008

Time: 3:00pm

Place: Guizhou University

S14: Ok. **The first word is an object, we hang on the wall near the door, to let the postman drop in our letters.**

J: ［Mailbox］?

S14: ［Mailbox］. Yes. And the second word is also a noun. **It is very important between husband and wife, among friends or even in the army.** Em .. a husband and wife must have it to, to each other ...

J: Love.

S14: No, no, no. Friends must have it to each other, and em .. soldier must have it to the general.

J: Respect.

S14: No. **Without it, the couple may divorce, friendship may break up. The opposite condition is cheating or something like that.**

J: Er, .. em ...

S14: And, and it is also very important in army, **you know.**

J: Loyalty?

S14: Yes.

J: Good. Very good.

Interviewer: Taylor Helmes

Interviewee: S14 (Meng Yuan from HP Science)

Date: May 31ˢᵗ, 2008

Time: 3:00pm

Place: Guizhou University

Student 15: Um the first word is **it is widely used in foreign countries, like your country um when um in winter it is used to use to make warm.**

Foreigner: Heater? Jacket?

Student 15: No, **in a um maybe in the wall, it's made of ⌈stone⌋..**

Foreigner:⌈Stone⌋? Brick?

Student 15: **To make warm.**

Foreigner: Fireplace.

Student 15: Yes. The second word is **when *when* we saw a real *real* object we use (we use) our brains to think it most colorful one.**

Foreigner: Viewing?

Student 15: **We use our brain to (think it out) .. to think out ..**

Foreigner: Imagine?

Student 15: Yes, *an* and …

Foreigner: Imagination

Role Play Task

Shop Assistant: Chen Junyi (HP Arts)

Customer: Zhao Jiazhi (HP Arts)

Date: June 14ᵗʰ, 2008

Time: 9:00am

Place: Guizhou University

S: Can I help you, sir?

C: Oh, yes. Last week I have *buy* .. bought a shirt and camera in your store, but I found that the shirt the color is **not, not …**

S: ［**Not suit**］**?**

C: ［not suit］. Because I bought it for my brother, he doesn't like the color.

S: What's wrong with the camera?

C: The camera, when I *use* it in the beach, (but I think) but I found it broken, it's broken.

S: **Broken?**

C: Ye ..

S: **Are you sure?**

C: Yes, it cannot work.

S: Can I check it?

C: Ok.

S: So, camera … broken …

C: Can I *can I* … I refund the camera?

S: Ye, it is indeed broken.

S: **Yes, what? Here we go.**

C: **Refund**

S: **Refund it?**

C: Ye.

S: Sir, um, we had a rule that if the camera had quality problem, so you can refund in three days and you can exchange it in seven days. But now you come here *for it's* about eight days, **so it's out of time.** So we can't refund and exchange it for you. So that's a problem, but we can guarantee we can fix it for you.

C: **Oh, you mean that I cannot refund it? But you can repair it.**

S: Ye, ye of course.

C: Ok, but you must *sure* that won't happen again.

S: Ye, ye of course.

C: And the shirt I may change a color.

S: Ye, ye of course. **The shirt** we can change the color for you. What color do you like?

C: Maybe I think the blue one is ok.

S: Blue one?

C: Ye

S: What's the mark?

C: **Mark?**

S: **What's the size?**

C: The same size.

S: Same

C: Same size as…

S: Ok, ok, ok

C: Ok

S: So blue shirt

C: Right? Ye…

S: The blue shirt ..

C: Ok, how long can I take the camera?

S: Um, about one week, **ok?**

C: Ok

S: After one week you can come here .. I will I will give you the camera.

C: Ok

S: Ok, thank you, sir.

Shop Assistant: Chen Changhui (LP Arts)

Customer: Zhang Qiong (LP Arts)

Date: June 14th, 2008

Time: 9:00am

Place: Guizhou University

S: Can I help you?

C: Yes. *I, I,* I must get you *hand*.

S: What's wrong with you?

C: You, *I, I,* I bought *your* I bought *your shop*, I bought two goods in this shop. And this is, and they *is* very *very* bad.

S: What items did you bought?

C: Er, the first one is, is a T-shirt and another is a camera. It is very bad for me.

S: **What problems with it, with them?**

C: **Problem?**

S: Yes.

C: I will show you.

S: Let me see.

…

C: You know this is the T-shirt. The T-shirt is red, but the color, but the T-shirt is for, is for my brother's birthday. The color *is* didn't fit him.

S: Oh.

C: And another is a camera. You know the camera is broken. We didn't use any more.

S: Oh. I am so sorry about it. And first I, I think you, you can keep calm. And we I think…

C: This time I am very, very worry, and I am, even I am angry. I just want to get back my money.

S: **Did you mind I ask you some questions?**

C: **Yes, please.**

S: Oh. First when did you buy, buy them.

C: (   ) Let me see. Maybe it's, em, … maybe it's the 14th of September. Yes, it's September.

S: Oh. I know. (   ) our goods. Oh. The time of changing our goods is two weeks. **Do you know?**

C: **Two weeks?**

S: Yes. So …

C: **Is this the rule?**

S: So to-today is the first of October. **So your goods *is* not in the time.** Em. So, so…

C: **What?** It's, it's *didn't* (   ) *me here*.

S: But it's, it is two. So I think you can accept it. *I, I,* I think we will take some measure to (   ) it.

C: Yes, **for example.**

S: Er, em, we can give you some ［presents］.

C: ［**Present**］**?**

S: And we can give you our card, which *is* you can gain some benefits you, you buy our goods, er, .. next time.

C: Sound good. Let me see. Maybe I will choose the second measure.

S: Ok. I will give you a card?

C: Yes. Thank. Let me see. A card.

S: Welcome to our shop again?

C: Oh. I am very *very* busy now. Maybe I will go out. Thank you. Bye-bye.

S: Bye-bye.

Shop Assistant: Wang Zhe (HP Science)

Customer: Zhang Liyuan (HP Science)

Date: June 14th, 2008

Time: 3:00pm

Place: Guizhou University

S: Oh. Good afternoon, what can I do for you?

C: Oh. Good afternoon, Madam. Last week I buy a shirt from this and for my brother's birthday. But he didn't like this color. You see, the red color is so terrible.

S: Oh. **Is this shirt?**

C: Yes, it's this.

S: Oh. When did you buy it?

C: Oh. Last week.

S: **Oh. You want what?**

C: I want my money back. I didn't like this color and my brother also didn't like this color. And I want my money back. I will, (I will) buy another one.

S: Oh. Ok, ok. I should say I'm sorry, according to the rule, the rules of our company you can, you can, you can return the goods and get your money back within two days. **But it's, it's already seven days, right?**

C: **Why?** You didn't tell me when I *buy* this.

S: Ok. You can put it back and see and sit here. This, this, this has an instruction. (This Oh.) 对。Ok, you can see it, "you can return the goods and get your money back within two days".

C: Two days.

S: And you can change the goods, change the goods within seven days.

C: Oh, yes. No. **I can change this shirt?**

S: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think the best solution to your problem is change, change…

C: **Can you show me?**

S: Ok, ok. Follow me. You can see, the, *this has* so many shirt with the same model. You can see it's red….

C: Oh, yes. White one, blue one.

S: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It has so many colors.

C: Also these colors *is* so terrible. I didn't like this color. I like black one.

S: **Black?**

C: Yes. My brother also *like* black one.

S: Oh. Could you, could you think you can **change for another model.** No, no this one.

C: **Model?**

S: You can see, this has many models. And the, this has black, black color.

C: Hem…does this…

S: You can see they have so (many goods). You can, you can change it a …

C: Oh. Yes. This one, this one. I like this one.

S: Ok, ok.

C: Em, thank you very much. And I also have another problem.

S: Oh. **What?**

C: A camera. A month ago, I buy a camera from this. But this camera is ….

S: Oh, oh, oh. I remember, I remember.

C: And last week we went to the beach. And then it was drop into the water. And water, [Maybe]

S: [Maybe], it *drop it or*?

C: It can't take the photos.

S: Em… I see, I see.

C: And when I buy it, when I buy it, you tell me it was, it can prevent *by* from water. And you said, (it was men), it was in water it *was* can use. But now I can't take photos.

S: Ok. Er…let me see.

C: I want my money back.

S: Maybe, according to, according to the customer satisfactory, 那个，survey, our, our, our, the quality of our goods is always excellent. Maybe your goods …

C: But you have said.

S: …you have bought is exception. Let me see it. Er…

C: You tell me it can use in the water.

S: Could you, could you put the goods here for a few days and let me, let our, er, **let me repair it, ok**？

C: A few days. No, no. Last week I *will* went to the beach.

S: **Last week?**

C: Yes. Next week, next week.

S: Next week. Oh. It only have one day.

C: Also use the camera.

S: The time is so *limit.*

C: I can't, I can't, I can't…

S: Maybe …

C: Em…And I want my money back. And I will go to another shop to buy a new one.

S: Oh. No, no, no. Ok. Calm down, calm down, calm down.

C: I think you shop is so terrible.

S: Let me, let me see, er…maybe I, er…I can talk to my, our manager, to, to…

C: **Your manager?**

S: **Ok?**

C: Oh, yes.

S: Wait for a few minutes. (a few seconds later) ok. Ok. Er … you can change for a new one, **ok?**

C: A new one?

S: Yeah. Open to change for a new one.

C: But a new one also can't use in the water.

S: No, no, no, no, no. I have says that your goods you have bought last week, er… last month is an exception.

C: **Exception?**

S: Yeah. It's, *it's* maybe have, maybe have a, a few mistakes. But this new one *don't* have the problem, **ok**?

C: Yes, yes. And you can give a new one.

S: Ok, ok. Let me…this one is the same model and same size.

C: But I think if next week, I went to the beach it also can't use in the water, I will want my money back. I will never *go* this shop.

S: Ok, you can come back, you can come back.

C: Thank you very much.

S: Ok. This has a customer satisfactory survey. Could you write it for us?

C: Oh. Quality of your goods. I think…it's very poor, so poor.

S: I have said that your problem is an exception.

C: Not exception.

S: You, you can …

C: But why when I want to go, it also broke？

S: Ok. Ok. You can go on.

C: Survey for shop assistant. Em…I think satisfactory.

S: Ok. And the third one.

C: The return goods policy. Em…Excellent.

S: Ok, ok.

C: Will you visit our shop again. Em, let me see. If this good is not broken, I will go.

S: This, this won't *broke*. This one won't *broken,* I promise.

C: Sometimes.

S: Ok, ok. Thank you, thank you.

Shop Assistant: Zhang Yulian (LP Science)

Customer: Xie Shimei (LP Science)

Date: June 14th, 2008

Time: 3:00pm

Place: Guizhou University

S: **Could you help what can I do for you?**

C: Yes, I bought I bought a shirt and a camera um to the restaurant but they they are broken, both of them. **The the shirt was *my was* my brother birthday,** but he doesn't like the color. And when when I took *the took* the camera to the belt I *dis* discovered it was broken. I I want my money back now.

S: Let me have a look at this two goods, and *and* your um **the card for um**

C: Um, sure is it?

S: **This um what's the time did you buy them?**

C: 〔Last month〕.

S: 〔**Last month**〕**?**

C: Yes.

S: Um, in our shop, it has there has *it rules*, um you (an) return your goods in two weeks.

C: But um when I bought the some goods, **you couldn't *didn't* ask *told* me this.**

S: Oh, it can see anywhere in our shop.

C: **Um, you can ask your your shop assistant**

S: **Um, my manager?**

C: Um um ye

S: He *doesn't* there. So so I couldn' help you.

C: Um? He *doesn't* there?

S: Yes, he (got)

C: You can ask **your shop assistant.**

S: **What?**

C: Short a bit.

S: Um, **I have told you that the manager *doesn't there*.**

C: Um, um um I I have *a* idea, um

S: **What?**

C: But I want my money now.

S: Sorry, I couldn't help you.

C: Um, um **you can you can change another color? The t-shirt?** My brother doesn't like the color.

S: **Change another color?** Maybe I can have you change another t-shirt. But about this camera I can't help you.

C: **Why?**

S: This is not in my shop.

C: Um I want I want um use I want um I want change a red one. **Could you give me?**

S: Um, yes. OK, I can give I can give you another color.

C: But the the camera is broken I couldn't use it.

S: Um when you bought the camera, do you like it?

C: I .. I forgot.

S: Sorry I don't know um this is the camera is broken or you made it broken.

C: **Um, but you you you say you can give a red one. T-shirt?**

S: Um, I can give you a red one. But the camera I can't help you.

C: So bad luck.

S: OK, that's all.

APPENDIX 8

A SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer: An Mei

Interviewee: Students

Date: June 23rd, 2008

Time: 9:00am

Place: Guizhou University

I: I would like to know about these two activities which you did. The first one is the concept identification. Another is the role play. I want to know whether you met some communication difficulties or not when you performed them. Let's start from Meng Yuan.

S: Abstract words were more difficult to explain when I did the word explanation while concrete words were relatively easy. I must give some examples to describe the abstract one. This method by comparison with the others is not safe, not easy to achieve the objective.

I: What aspects do you think your difficulties are from? Because after you finished the explanation, the interlocutor could not immediately guess the meaning of the expression you spoke.

S: I found some ways to let him guess the word "loyalty" first. I said it is very important. It exists between husband and wife or between friends. He gave "love" first. Later I said it also exists in the army forces, especially the soldiers possess it to their captains. I just tried to think of a way to narrow its scope.

My understanding is that I changed to another way when this one didn't work. For example, I used the relationship between couples to explain it, but he couldn't understand. I used the relationship between soldiers and generals instead. Finally he guessed it out correctly. In other words, you have to deal with the communication difficulties in different methods.

I: Well, how about the role play?

S: There is no problem about that.

I: Did you have any negotiation discussion or reach any agreement before the activity?

S: Yes. We almost planned all the positions each person undertook.

I: Who played with you?

S: Zhang Jingyang.

I: I want to know whether you have a negotiation procedure when you did the role play.

S: We acted as a shop assistant and a customer separately. The key point is that the customer pretended to be very angry and strongly asked for the returning of the good. But the shop assistant tried to persuade him not to do so. First he was asked about what he bought, and then was told he could return within a period of time. We have a good policy. For example, without changing it, he could get a free maintenance. After negotiating with each other for a while, we reached a certain agreement.

I: What agreement did you reach at last?

S: In order to avoid acting too long, it is envisaged that finally the customer accepted these services the shop assistant provided.

I: The staff is very persuasive.

S: These policies are also attractive.

I: You said the policy can be changed?

S: There was also free maintenance

I: Looking back over the years you've learned English, you should have a lot of opportunities to communicate with the others in English. What difficulties did you encounter?

S: My vocabulary size is too small and there are many words I couldn't remember, especially the professional vocabulary in terms of social science. The attributive clauses have been largely used to describe what I want to express.

I: In addition to lack of vocabulary, what are the other difficulties you come across?

S: The sentences which I expressed are too simple, too many simple sentences.

I: Did you think it's different or not when you speak English with native speakers or with Chinese? Did you think you are fluent in speaking English with native speakers?

S: I think my oral English is poor.

I: What do you think is high level proficiency?

S: Complete structure and complex sentence patterns.

I: Do you always think so?

S: It's too dull in using simple sentences all the time because the linguistic competence seems to be not strong enough.

I: Did you feel that your mother tongue has any effect on your English speaking?

S: Personally speaking I felt I was rarely impacted. Because I hardly speak English by thinking in Chinese.

I: Now look at the questionnaire. Which one of the following strategies did you think you used?

S: for example, coin new words.

I: No matter whether the word is correct, but we often coin new words. Could it help you solve the difficulties by coining these words? Could they understand when you speak with foreigners?

S: Almost. On one occasion I talked with one of my English native friends about that he was very allergic to flowers. However, I did not know how to say the scientific name of *pollen*, and then I coined the word like *flower powder*. You guess what, he could understand.

I: What else did you use with regard to the communication strategies?

S: Sometimes when I encountered the word I didn't know, I asked the native speaker directly. For example, how to call this or that? What is the term used to describe this or that? Directly to ask him in English, instead of using body language or looking at him for help or come to a halt. I also ask him whether he can understand me when they show their doubt about what I say.

I: Have you ever used "for example"?

S: I have.

I: When will you use this method?

S: When I feel that the person can't understand me.

I: You have basically used the communication strategies mentioned in the survey?

S: more or less.

I: Ok, that's all for the interview. Thanks for your participation and patience.

APPENDIX 9

FREQUENCY FORM OF CSs IN THE PRESENT STUDY

CSs			C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	C13	C14	C15	C16	C17	C18
S	H	T1																		
		T2																		
	L	T1																		
		T2																		
A	H	T1																		
		T2																		
	L	T1																		
		T2																		

CURRICULUM VITAE

An Mei was born in Guizhou Province of China. She obtained her BA degree in English Linguistics and Literature from Guizhou University in 1991. In 1999, she graduated from Southwestern Normal University of China (the current Southwestern University) with a MA degree in Linguistics and Literature. She studied as a visiting scholar in 2000 at Dominican University, Chicago, the United States of America.

Since her graduation from Guizhou University in 1991, An Mei has been teaching English in the College English Department at Guizhou University. She is currently an associate professor of the College of International Studies at Guizhou University, China. In 2009, she alone chaired a research project sponsored by Guizhou Educational Department.

An Mei earned her Ph D degree in English Language Studies in 2009 from Suranaree University of technology, Thailand. Her academic areas of interest include applied linguistics and sociolinguistics. She can be reached at the email: anmaygd@hotmail.com.