

The Impact of Communication Strategies Instruction on Kurdish EFL Students' Willingness to Communicate in Kurdistan

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Abstract

A great deal of research have been conducted on Communication strategies (CSs) in EFL settings. A number of studies have also highlighted the impact of CSs on other learning variables. Willingness to communicate (WTC), as an important predictor of becoming a proficient learner (MacIntyre, Babin, & Clement, 1999), has recently received some attention in second language learning. This study aimed at exploring the impact of CSs on Kurdish students' WTC in Kurdistan Regional Government. For this purpose, 30 pre-intermediate EFL learners participated in an experimental study. Fifteen learners comprised the experimental group and received instruction on CSs for 12 sessions over four-week time period. Fifteen students also formed the controlled group for the study. A self-report measurement of WTC (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrad, 2001) was administered twice both before and after the treatment. Further, interviews were conducted with the experimental groups two weeks after the treatment to examine the participants' views and perceptions over CSs instruction. The between-subject ANCOVA results revealed that instruction of CSs significantly impacted the experimental group's WTC. The analysis of the interview results also showed that experimental group members mostly regarded the CSs instruction as effective and beneficial for their language learning. Some implications of the study were also provided.

Key words: communication strategies (CSs), instruction, willingness to communicate (WTC), EFL learners

Introduction

English is the dominant language of education all over the world. Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is also not an exception. English as a foreign language is taught at schools and universities as a major part of students' scientific background. Increasing number of students in KRG have enrolled in English classes and schools in the hope of increasing their employment opportunities (Jarrar, 2014).

However, EFL learning is always fraught with a lot of constraints and challenges. In this regard, Zohud (2015) refers to the complexities of teaching and learning English in EFL contexts. This implies that both teachers and students encounter challenges in their contexts. Researchers like Al-Mutawa (1997) and Sorour (2009) also pointed to the difficulty of the learning process as well. It is therefore important for researchers and second language stakeholders such as teachers and administrators to address these difficulties and challenges and offer solutions. A promising avenue of research in this regard can be communication strategies (CSs) research.

Background to the study

The field of second language teaching experienced dramatic changes in 1970s through the emergence of communicative teaching approach. Since then, the communicative teaching approach and teaching communicatively have been the buzzwords of the field and researchers have been on the lookout to come up with approaches to enable learners to communicate effectively in second language. In this regard, Skehan (1998) suggested creating the right opportunities for the learners by motivating them to interact, especially the learners who are passive or silent and are not inclined to get engaged in interactions. In this regard, language learning strategies have been associated to language learning by a number of researchers and successful language learners have also been reported to use different types of language learning strategies.

Communication strategies as part of language learning strategies have been found to play an important role in learners' willingness to participate in language-related activities. McCroskey and Baer (1985) explored the variability in talking behavior or the willingness to engage and interact in communication in L1 by coining the term willingness to communicate. The two scholars enumerated a number of social and affective factors that can indicate the degree of a person's willingness to get engaged in communication with others when the opportunity arises. Their research findings further revealed that higher levels of willingness to communicate (WTC) among language learners are associated with successful language acquisition.

Thus the researchers have attempted to find out what factors affect learners' willingness to communicate. Donovan and MacIntyre (2004) found that being reticent and unwilling to communicate negatively influence one's language learning. Moreover, Richmond and Roach (1992) argued that unwillingness to communicate is usually synonymous with inefficiency and lack of capacity.

Further, considering the context of EFL, the situation is a little complicated as exposure to second language outside of the classroom setting is usually limited and learners often experience impoverished language input compared to ESL context. In the context of Kurdistan Region where English is learned as a foreign language,

English classes are usually the only places where learners can find the opportunities to interact with other learners or their teachers. Therefore, their willingness to get engaged in communication and interact with others can be a determining factor in their success in language learning. Thus, equipping these learners with the appropriate learning strategies particularly communicative strategies can improve their overall language learning. This study intends to explore the effect of communication strategies on language learners' willingness to communicate in Kurdistan.

The Statement of the Problem

Based on the researcher's observation in the context of the study and his preliminary literature review, this research explored the impact of communication strategies on KRG learners' willingness to communicate. The reason for the research is due to the fact that exposure to English outside of the classroom in the context under study is limited and students experience difficulties in getting engaged in conversation with other students and their teachers.

Moreover, it is believed that the use of CSs helps to engage students in learning activities (Kumar, 2007; Zohud, 2015). This is because such strategies are considered to have a motivating effect on students. Furthermore, it is believed that CSs help to deal with effective filter problems such as depression, fear and anxiety which may negatively affect a student's participation and engagement in oral activities during classes (Thomson, 2012).

Further, it has been noted that there are different factors which influence the effectiveness of communicative and teaching strategies on students' oral engagement (Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006). Such factors are related to differences in demographic elements such as age, gender, academic qualification and experience. This however remains unexplored and hence calls for studies to examine the implications of demographics elements on students' willingness to communicate in EFL classes. This study therefore seeks to examine the impact of communication strategies on students' willingness to communicate in EFL classes.

Research Questions:

In the light of what was discussed so far, the current study intends to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of communication strategies instruction on Kurdish students' willingness to communicate?
2. What are the perceptions and views of Kurdish students' toward communication strategies instruction (circumlocution, word coinage, foreignizing, approximation, literal translation, appealing for help and code switching strategies)?

The significance of research

The current study explored the impact of communication strategies on students' willingness to communicate and their strategy perception and beliefs. The findings and the implications of the study can contribute to a better understanding of the issue in question and ultimately a better pedagogy of English language teaching in Kurdistan region. The study also made theoretical contributions to L2 speaking research, particularly on their willingness to communicate.

Moreover, the study offered some theoretical implications by providing additional evidence to the instruction of CSs since the instruction of CSs and its effectiveness has been a contested issue in the field of English language teaching. Furthermore, there seems to be a paucity of research especially in the context under study on the impact of CSs instruction on EFL learners' WTC.

Theoretical Framework

Communication strategies as strategic competence

Strategic competence has been an important component of communicative competence since its introduction by Canale and Swain (1980) who argued that strategic competence includes "verbal and non-verbal strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence" (p. 30). Some years later, Canale (1983) made some modification to the definition and viewed strategic competence as the essential skills which form the basis of actual communication. In the new version, the scholar expanded the concept by including two main elements for strategic competence namely communication strategies and production strategies. Thus, the concept of strategic competence has ever since been used to guide the CSs studies. Later, Swain (1984) emphasized the importance of CSs in strategic competence by expanding the concept of strategic competence to include "communication strategies that may be called into action either to enhance the effectiveness of communication or to compensate for breakdowns" (p. 189).

Some years later, Tarone and Yule (1989) expanded the concept of strategic competence to include "the ability to select an effective means of performing a communicative act...Thus, strategic competence is gauged, not by degree of correctness (as with grammatical competence) but rather by degree of success, or effectiveness" (p. 105). The two scholars argued that strategic competence consists of two interrelated areas, one is the ability of the learner in transmitting the message to the other person involved in communication and the other is the use of CSs to solve communication problems. Viewed in this way, CSs have been considered as a focal point of strategic competence whereby learners resolve their communication problems.

Further, Faerch and Kasper (1986) claimed that strategic competence is the learner's ability to solve linguistically and pragmatically related communication problems which consists of communication strategies and learning strategies. Faerch and Kasper (1986) defined CSs as the learner's skills in solving communication problems when they arise and learning strategies as procedures "to solve problems in expanding foreign language knowledge and in increasing its accessibility" (p. 180).

In addition, Bachman (1990) defined strategic competence as "the capacity that relates competence or knowledge of language, to the language user's

knowledge structures and the features of the context in which communication takes place” (Bachman, 1990, p. 107). Bachman and Palmer (1996) further extended the definition to include “a set of metacognitive components, or strategies, which can be thought of as higher order executive processes that provide a cognitive management function in language use as well as in other cognitive activities” (p. 70). Furthermore, Brown (2007) argued that all CSs are part of the strategic competence which is a crucial element of a learner’s communicative competence. Thus, CSs can be taught to learners to develop their strategic competence especially in real-life situations.

CSs have also been studied from two different perspectives namely, the interactional view and the psycholinguistic view which will be explained in the next two sections.

Conceptualization of CSs through interactional view

Tarone (1980) is considered the first scholar who viewed CSs from the social interactional viewpoint. As the name suggests, interaction between the language learners and negotiation of meaning through interaction are the focal point to consider the CSs. According to Tarone (1980), CSs need to meet all the following criteria:

1. A speaker desires to communicate a meaning x to a listener.
2. The speaker believes the linguistic or sociolinguistic structure desired to communicate meaning x is unavailable or is not shared with the listener.
3. The speaker chooses to:
 - a. avoid-not attempt to communicate meaning x or
 - b. attempt alternate means to communicate meaning x. The speaker stops trying alternatives when it seems clear to the speaker that there is shared meaning. (p. 419)

Further, according to this view, CSs are conceptualized as “a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared” (Tarone, 1980, p. 419). That is, meaning is negotiated between the interlocutors through joint attempt by both the speaker and the listener in a communication enterprise. Therefore, Tarone (1980, p. 420) defined CSs as “tools used in a joint negotiation of meaning where both interlocutors are attempting to agree as to a communicative goal” and “a shared enterprise in which both the speaker and the hearer are involved rather than being only the responsibility of the speaker”. Upon the occurrence of non-understanding, participants in conversation may resort to different type of CSs especially paraphrasing, transferring, and avoidance strategies (Tarone, 1980). According to the same theory, Canale (1983) also proposed two types of CSs:

- “(1) strategies to compensate for disruptions in communication problems due to speakers’ insufficient target language knowledge,
 (2) strategies to enhance the effectiveness of communication with interlocutors”
 (p.12).

As the definitions show, they are related to solving communication problems through negotiation of meaning. Thus, according to the interactional view, CSs are used by learners to negotiate meaning and to transmit the message through

interaction, that is, CSs are both problem-solving and message enhancement devices (Nakatani & Goh, 2007).

Conceptualization of CSs through psycholinguistic view

Unlike the interactional perspective supporters who consider CSs as mutual attempt by participants in conversation, a number of other researchers such as Faerch and Kasper (1983) and Bialystok (1990) have come to view CSs from a cognitive perspective in which the learner oneself is engaged in the production or comprehension process to solve communication problems. Dornyei and Scott (1995) also saw CSs as cognitive processes underlying strategic language use and Faerch and Kasper (1983) defined them as “potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal” (p.36). Thus, according to the definition, CSs can be seen as planning and execution of speech production during oral communication in which the individual solve communication problems through his or her mental processes rather than through cooperative attempt. According to this view, CSs are considered as problem-management efforts related to language production problems during planning stages which are different from other problem-solving or meaning-negotiation strategies which are called in after a communication problem occurs (Dornyei & Scott, 1995).

Further, Bialystok (1990) explored CSs based on the language processing perspective and claimed that CSs should be classified based on different cognitive processes. Moreover, Poulisse (1990) also argued in favor of the psychological processes underlying strategy use and defined CSs as

Compensatory strategies are processes, operating on conceptual and linguistic knowledge representations, which are adopted by language users in the creation of alternative means of expression when linguistic shortcomings make it possible for them to communicate their intended meanings in the preferred manner. (p. 192-3)

In summary, according to the psycholinguistic view, CSs are employed to overcome limitations and gaps in a learner’s lexical knowledge.

Literature review

Faerch and Kasper (1983) argued in favor of teaching CSs and noted that the purpose of teaching should determine teaching CSs, that is, if the purpose of teaching is only transmitting information, it is unnecessary to teach CSs, however, if the purpose of teaching is raising the learners’ awareness over the aspects of their already existing strategies, CSs instruction should be the focus of classroom instruction. The two scholars asserted that “by learning how to use communication strategies appropriately, learners will be more able to bridge the gap between formal and informal learning situations, between pedagogic and non-pedagogic communicative situations” (p.56).

Willems (1987) also supported teaching CSs by saying that CSs are mostly used unconsciously by language users in their L1 which requires explicit teaching so that second language learners become familiar with their own preferences and limitations. The researcher further argued that more time should be devoted to practicing CSs in various situations.

Moreover, O’Malley (1987) also supports the teachability of strategic competence by pointing out that some strategies can be easily incorporated into the available curricula as they can improve the overall performance of the students. The

researcher further suggests that future research incorporate strategies training approaches in their program, identify the most successful strategies' and assess the effect of strategies and their instruction on students' overall performance.

Later, Tarone and Yule (1989) argued in favor of more explicit and focused CSs instruction approaches. They called for a needs-analysis approach through which strategic skills can be identified and later taught. The two scholars suggested explicit teaching of CSs and practice of those skills.

Dornyei (1995) also is another researcher who is in support of CSs instruction. He enumerated three reasons behind the controversy of CSs instruction. "(1) most of the arguments on both sides are based on indirect or inconclusive evidence, (2) there is variation within CSs with regard to their teachability, and (3) the notion of teaching allows for a variety of interpretations" (p. 61). The researcher is in favor of focused instruction of CSs through an explicit and awareness-raising approach.

In another study, Bejarano et al. (1997) conducted a study on 34 students in a comprehensive high school divided into a treatment and an experimental group. Both groups were involved in group discussion activities but only treatment group received instruction on a group of CSs such as modified-interaction strategies and social interaction strategies (checking for comprehension', 'clarification', 'appealing for assistance', 'giving assistance', etc). The results of the study revealed that although both groups used more social interaction strategies than modified-interaction strategies before and after the treatment, the treatment group used more social interaction strategies. The researcher concluded that teaching interaction strategies can help students to improve their negotiation skills and can provide adequate comprehensible inputs and outputs for second language learning and acquisition.

Cohen et al. (1998) taught a set of specific oral communication strategies such as 'preparation', 'self-monitoring', and 'self-evaluation' to a group of ESL learners at the University of Minnesota. The results of pre- and post-training speaking tests showed that experimental group scored higher in their speaking tests. However, the overall result of Cohen et al.'s study indicated that teaching CSs did not lead to learners' improved communicative ability which the researchers attributed to the instructional model they used. However, the researchers claimed that it is possible to teach CSs.

In support of effectiveness of teaching CSs, Maleki (2007) conducted a study on 60 students divided into two classes with two different textbooks in Iran, one textbook incorporating CSs instruction and the other without CSs. The findings of the research revealed that materials containing CSs were more pedagogically effective and conducive to language learning.

Overall, the studies reviewed here provided various evidence as to the usefulness and validity of teaching CSs. These studies indicate that by teaching CSs learners become aware of their own oral performance and weaknesses. Moreover, practicing such strategies can lead to higher oral communication skills in the long run. Teaching CSs can also enhance learners' sense of security and self-confidence and can encourage them to communicate with others despite their inadequate interlanguage resources.

A number of studies have also been against teaching CSs to second language learners for various reasons (e.g. Bongaerts & Poulisse, 1989; Kellerman, 1991; Paribakht, 1985). These researchers believe that strategic competence is a byproduct of first language acquisition and can easily be transferred to second language use. For example, Kellerman (1991) argued that instruction of compensatory strategies is not necessary in second language classroom as students

who cannot use strategies properly need more instruction on language than strategies. Kellerman (1991) further claimed that “the answer seems simple enough. Teach the learners more language and let the strategies look after themselves (p. 158).

Additionally, Bialystok (1990) noted that CSs are reflections of underlying psychological processes which cannot be taught through simple instruction, that is, teaching strategies should only be done for the high-level functioning of analysis and control. For linguistic system analysis one needs to teach language while for control processes, practice is required. Thus, Bialystok (1990) concluded that students need language structure rather than strategies.

Overall, the major arguments against teaching CSs is that CSs can be easily transferred from L1 to L2 use, that is, L2 users already possess this strategic competence. Therefore, the proponents of this view argue that language teachers should teach language in L2 classes and “let the strategies look after themselves” (Kellerman, 1991, p.158).

A number of studies on CSs have also embarked on investigating the issue in relation to other learners’ or learning variables. For example, Rossiter (2003) examined the effect of CS training on strategy use and task performance on a group of adult immigrants in Canada. The experimental group received 12 hours of direct CS training. For assessment, the researcher used object description tasks and narratives and found that teaching CSs had little impact on the participants’ performance.

Additionally, Manchon (2000) also advocated teaching CSs by arguing that it can establish a sense of security and self-confidence in learners as they attempt to communicate in L2 with their current resources. The author further claims that especially the less confident and less capable students can benefit most from such instruction. Manchon (2000) argued that when a learner knows that there are ways to convey one’s message despite the lack of knowledge over a certain vocabulary, he or she can confidently use CSs to get his meaning across. Such an approach can also encourage creativity and foster the learner’s strategic competence.

Recently, Huang (2010), investigated a group of students’ oral communication strategy use with regard to variables such as gender, language proficiency and motivation. The findings of the research indicated that self-perceived oral proficiency, frequent use of English speaking and motivation were strong predictors of oral communication strategies while gender and English proficiency had no effect on CSs use. Contrary to this research findings, Mei and Nathalang (2010) found that language proficiency, task type and academic major have a significant effect on CSs use. More recently, in an experimental study, Alibakhshi and Padiz (2011) found that CSs instruction and training were significantly stable in the experimental group in the long run.

However, investigation of CSs instruction in relation to willingness to communicate is a rarity in literature. A handful of studies have been conducted in this area which will be reviewed here. For instance, Mesgarshahr and Abdollahzadeh (2014) investigated the impact of teaching CSs on 120 EFL learners in Iran. Four groups underwent CSs instruction (communication strategy training) and four groups received only regular language instruction. The self-report measurement of WTC was used to measure the learners’ willingness to communicate before and after the treatment. The results of the study revealed that the degree of WTC of the treatment group was significantly higher compared with that of the control group. The

researchers concluded that teaching CSs lead to higher willingness to communicate in second language classes.

Additionally, Mirsane and Khabiri (2016) conducted a study on a group of sixty EFL learners in Iran homogenized in terms of their language proficiency through PET. The group was divided into control and experimental groups, 30 students in each group. The CSs were taught over an academic semester to the experimental group. A willingness to communicate questionnaire was distributed to the groups before and after the treatment as pretest and posttest. The results of the WTC pretest and posttest scores of the two groups indicated that CSs instruction had significantly increased the experimental group's willingness to communicate.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-method design. Mixed-method research is a method of inquiry which employs a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in its data collection and analysis. The central premise of this method of inquiry is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches will provide a more comprehensive and thorough understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2003).

In the first phase of the study, we used an experimental design through teaching specific CSs for about 12 sessions over a semester of three months and administering a WTC measurement to control and experimental groups both as pre-test and post-test. The post-test followed the treatment after around 12 sessions. The first phase constituted our quantitative data and the second phase formed our qualitative data for this research. In the second phase of the research, the experimental group students took part in the interview and answered a number of questions on the Strategy-based instruction that they received, their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes towards the treatment that they underwent. This phase of qualitative method was used to "enhance and expand quantitative measures" (Campbell & Russo, 1999:129).

Overall, the quantitative findings provided general information about the students' willingness to communicate and the qualitative data gave in-depth and detailed findings of how the Kurdish students used and why they preferred certain strategies as well as what they think about the role of strategies and strategies instruction.

3.2 Setting and participants

The present study aimed to investigate the instruction of communication strategies on a group of 30 Kurdish students in Erbil city in Kurdistan. The setting of the research is Britannia Educational Services (Cambridge College of English), in city of Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan. The center has been offering counselling and services in Kurdistan three major cities namely, Erbil, Sulaimani and Duhok for over 12 years. The center has been the first language center which was established in 2006 in the region. Britannia Educational Services (Teacher Training) offers various teaching qualifications through its Teacher training programme such as TKT (Teacher Knowledge Test) and CELTA in affiliation with the English UK Partner Agency Scheme.

The participants of the research were selected from students who were in their pre-intermediate level that is level 3. The center offers six levels according to Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) namely Starter level, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper-intermediate, and Advanced. The students came from various carrier backgrounds and ranged in age from 18 to 34.

Before the treatment started, the researcher contacted the head of the college and explained his aim of the research. The researcher as teacher distributed a consent form among 34 students and explained his aim of the research to the students. The students were also told that they could quit the research at any time. However, all the students willingly consented to take part in the study and even asked the researcher to share his findings with them.

Four students quit the program for various reasons, study abroad and personal reasons, two weeks into the program and the participants' number reduced to 30 students. Before the treatment, a Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) test was administered to the group to assess their level of English and to ensure their homogeneity. The students then were divided into two groups regarding their scores on the CPT test.

Fifteen students comprised the experimental group receiving treatment on eight communication strategies for over 12 sessions and fifteen students also formed the controlled group and received their regular instruction. Both group received instruction from the same teacher. The participants of the study consisted of 20 female and 10 male students and had already completed their Starter and Elementary levels. Table 3.1 provides the background information of the students who participated in the study.

Table 1 Background of the study participants

	Experimental group's background	Controlled group's background
Age	18 to 32 years old (mean 24.3)	18 to 34 years old (24.4)
Gender	Female= 9; Male= 6	Female= 11; Male= 4
Length of English study	4 to 15 years Mean (11.4)	4 to 15 Mean: (11.7)
Overall English proficiency	Pre-intermediate level	Pre-intermediate level

Communication in English outside the center	Never: 5	Never: 4
	Rarely: 4	Rarely: 4
	Sometimes: 6	Sometimes: 7
	Always: 0	Always: 0

As can be seen from table 3.1, the participants of the study ranged in age between 18 to 34 with experimental group's mean of 24.3 and with the controlled group's mean of 24.8. The length of English study for both group was between 4 to 15 years. The overall English proficiency for the group obtained through the CPT test showed that all the students were in pre-intermediate level. Around 30 percent of the participants had experience of either study or work abroad. Finally, communication outside of the classroom seemed to be low as 6 to 7 participants reported that they sometimes communicated in English outside of the classroom.

3.4 Treatment

In the treatment phase, eight communication strategies (Circumlocution, appeal for help, approximation, time-stalling devices, confirmation check, comprehension check, clarification request and all-purpose word) were selected from Dörnyei and Scott's (1997) taxonomy and were taught to the experimental group for over 12 sessions. Each of these communication strategies was taught in one session for about thirty minutes. Special tasks were used to teach the strategies through group activities. The students also were informed about the rationale and role of the strategies in their language learning.

The procedure used to teach these strategies was based on Dörnyei's (1995) suggestion for teaching CSs which followed the steps below:

1. Raising learner awareness about the nature and communicative potential of CSs by making learners conscious of strategies already in their repertoire, sensitizing them to the appropriate situations where these could be useful, and making them realize that these strategies could actually work.
2. Encouraging students to be willing to take risks and use CSs.
3. Providing L2 models of the use of certain CSs through demonstrations, listening materials and videos, and getting learners to identify, categorize, and evaluate strategies used by native speakers or other L2 speakers.
4. Highlighting cross-cultural differences in CS use might involve various degrees of stylistic appropriateness associated with CSs (e.g., in some languages particular CSs may be seen as indications of bad style).
5. Teaching CSs directly by presenting linguistic devices to verbalize CSs which have a finite range of surface structure realizations.
6. Providing opportunities for practice in strategy use appears to be necessary because CSs can only fulfill their function as immediate first aid devices if their use has reached an automatic stage. (pp. 62-64)

Special activities were used to teach the stated CSs to the students. There were various designed tasks for teaching the stated strategies. However, the researcher used the most suitable tasks and occasionally modified the tasks for the context under study. Group work and activities were used to encourage the learners to try these strategies.

3.5 Data collection Procedure

Both experimental and controlled group were instructed by the same teacher and received the same amount of instruction. However, only the experimental group received instruction on communication strategies. Prior to the treatment, both groups completed the WTC scale. The next step involved a treatment which ran for 12 sessions over four weeks. After this phase, the WTC scale was re-administered to the both control and experimental groups. This phase constituted the quantitative data of our research. In the second phase which formed the qualitative data of our research, two weeks after the treatment, interviews were conducted with the experimental group students. All the students in the experimental groups willingly consented to take part in the interview. Before the treatment, a CPT test was administered to the group to assess their level of English and to ensure their homogeneity.

3.6 Data analysis Procedure

In the first phase of this study, the self-report willingness to communicate (WTC) questionnaire was used to explore the impact of CSs instruction on the students' WTC before and after the CS instruction. The data gathered from the self-report WTC questionnaire were analyzed to find out the impact of CSs instruction on the students' WTC. The answers for each item in the questionnaire were assessed from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always) and then were added for each research participants. Later, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Version 16 was used to calculate the total scores for each participant. To measure the consistency of the items in the questionnaire, the Cronbach internal consistency coefficients were calculated to be 0.91 which was a good indication of the reliability of the questionnaire used to collect the quantitative data (Pallant, 2007).

Finally in the first phase, simple statistical computations such as Means and standard deviations were calculated first and then a one-way between-groups analysis covariance (One-way ANCOVA) was used to compare the impact of CSs instruction during the treatment period between the two groups.

In the second phase of the study, an oral interview was conducted with the research participants. For the analysis of the interview questions, the researcher went over the collected data several times and tried to analyze the perceptions of the participants of the study about the CSs instruction.

Results

For the first phase of the study, the research question was: What is the impact of communication strategies instruction on Kurdish students' willingness to

communicate? For this phase, a one-way ANCOVA was run through SPSS 16 to check the effect of CSs instruction on the study participants' willingness to communicate (WTC). Before running One-way ANCOVA, the normality assumption of scores in WTC pretest and posttest was checked. As table 2 indicates, the normality result revealed that all the obtained p value for pretest and posttest scores are greater than the selected significant value (0.05), meaning that the normality assumption is met.

Table 2 Shapiro-Wilk test of normality on the pretest and posttest of WTC

Variable		Groups	Statistics	df	Sig.
Willingness to communicate	Pretest	Control	0.934	15	0.398
		Experimental	0.952	15	0.330
	Posttest	Control	0.928	15	0.092
		Experimental	0.961	15	0.521

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the pretest and posttest scores obtained from both the control and experimental groups. The pretest WTC means obtained for experimental and controlled groups were 61.43 and 60.01 respectively. The posttest mean obtained from the experimental group was 77.26 while it was 61.79 for the controlled group.

Table 3 the descriptive statistics of WTC for both experimental and controlled groups

	Number of study participants	Minimum score	Maximum score	Mean	standard deviation
Pretest for control	15	40	79	60.01	10.7664
Posttest for the controlled group	15	46	82	61.79	10.9202
Pretest for experimental group	15	48	81	61.43	7.835
Posttest for experimental group	15	62	93	77.26	8.338

As table 4 below shows, the between-subject ANCOVA results indicated that treatment had a significant effect on WTC of the experimental group (($F(1, 13) = 93.2, p = .0005 < .05$, partial eta squared = .621) which was far beyond the pre-test difference. This is an indication of the effectiveness of CSs instruction on the WTC of the EFL learners in the context under study.

Table 4 tests of between-subject effect (post-experimental test as the dependent variable)

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta squared
Corrected Model	6970.543a	2	3435.125	118.231	0.000	0.807
Intercept	472.711	1	412.542	15.431	0.000	0.293
Pre-experimental	3107.468	1	3007.132	109.902	0.000	0.643
Group	2724.983	1	2541.917	93.2	0.000	0.621
Error	1621.126	27	27.332			
Total	30					

a. R squared = 0.807 (adjusted R squared = 0.807)

In the second phase of the study, the research question was: What are the perceptions and views of Kurdish students' toward communication strategies instruction (circumlocution, word coinage, foreignizing, approximation, literal translation, appealing for help and code switching strategies)?

To this question, the analysis of the interview data revealed that mostly the experimental group regarded the CSs instruction as useful and positive. In this regard, one of the participants mentioned "the instruction of CSs enabled me to think about speaking for the first time even in Kurdish and made me aware of the existence of such strategies" (S5). Another student indicated that "knowing that such strategies existed helped me see speaking English from a different perspective" (S7). One student also stated that the instruction of CSs enabled her to speak faster by thinking less about grammar and more about meaning. Additionally, some of the participants said that "teaching CSs made them feel less anxious and more confident

and enabled them to volunteer more for presentation and giving answers to the questions raised by the teachers. Two students also were not so sure about the instruction of the CSs as they felt that the teaching of CSs were more of a hindrance as they thought about these strategies every time they wanted to speak. The researcher believed that this is a positive effect of the CSs instruction as the students became aware of such tools.

Discussion

The findings of the quantitative data showed that the instruction of CSs directly impacted the experimental groups' willingness to communicate in English. This finding is also in line with Dörnyei's (1996) study findings which revealed that explicit instruction of CSs raises learners' awareness over this strategy which in turn helps them to be more proficient in their second language. This finding also supports the results of previous research findings on the effect of CSs instruction on EFL learners' WTC (Mesgarshahr & Abdollahzadeh, 2014; Mirsane & Khabiri, 2016). This can be also interpreted in several ways as explicit instruction of CSs enable the EFL learners handle communication problems better. In this regard, MacIntyre and Legatto (2011) claimed that when the learners cannot easily retrieve and use vocabulary, they become less inclined to participate in language interactions, that is, their level of WTC declines. For example the use of circumlocution or fillers can give the learner this advantage to compensate for the words that they cannot remember and buys them some time to think.

Another noteworthy point is the sense of security or confidence that explicit teaching of CSs can bring about (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994). Speaking a foreign language especially when the learner does not have a good command of the language can cause anxiety and apprehension which at times leads to their isolation or unwillingness to communicate. Thus, knowing how to manage communication problems can create security and confidence. This can also be related to the perception and beliefs that one holds towards his or her communicative competence (Clément et al., 2003). That is, when the learner feels positive towards his or her ability, this can enable the learner to take risks and hence get involved in interactions while a less secure and less confident learner may opt for avoidance strategies by taking few risks and hence avoid communications at all. Further, the instruction of CSs as stated earlier can afford psychological security (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994) and linguistic self-confidence (MacIntyre et al., 1998) which can be one reason why the experimental students in this study felt more willing to communicate after the treatment. Furthermore, the motivational aspect is another important aspect of CSs instruction as learners who receive such instruction can be motivated to try out their chances of communication and can become more confident to get involved in interactions with others.

Finally, the analysis of the interview data also revealed that the participants of the study regarded the instruction of CSs as effective. The experimental group mostly stated that they benefitted from CSs instruction and that they started using them in their speaking. Some even said that teaching these strategies had improved their speaking. This finding confirmed the findings of previous research which supported the instruction of CSs (Bejarano et al., 1997; Dornyei, 1995; Faerch and Kasper, 1983; Maleki, 2007; O'Malley, 1987; Tarone & Yule, 1989; Willems, 1987).

Conclusion

The analysis of the data revealed that instruction of CSs or the treatment significantly impacted the experimental group's WTC. Thus we conclude that teaching 8 CSs significantly affected the experimental group's WTC. Moreover, the analysis of the qualitative data also pointed to the usefulness and effectiveness of CSs and their instruction. This study can have some implications for EFL learners, instructors and stakeholders. Two important aspect of CSs as stated earlier can be motivation and awareness raising. Self-confidence can also be included as part of the motivational aspect as learners who receive strategy instruction become bolder and more confident to venture into communication. Moreover, syllabus designers and materials developers can benefit from the findings of this study by designing and developing textbooks which cater to the strategic learning of EFL learners through embedding CSs into various tasks.

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Appendix a: willingness to communicate (WTC) questionnaire

1 = Almost never willing

2 = Sometimes willing

3 = willing half of the time 4 = usually willing 5 = Almost always willing

Speaking in class, in English

1. Speaking in a group about your summer vacation.

2. Speaking to your teacher about your homework assignment.

3. A stranger enters the room you are in, how willing would you be to have a conversation if he talked to you first?

4. You are confused about a task you must complete, how willing are you to ask for instructions/clarification?

5. Talking to a friend while waiting in line.

6. How willing would you be to be an actor in a play?

7. Describe the rules of your favorite game.

8. Play a game in French, for example Monopoly.

Reading in class (to yourself, not out loud)

1. Read a novel.

2. Read an article in a paper.

3. Read letters from a pen pal written in native English.

4. Read personal letters or notes written to you in which the writer has deliberately used simple words and constructions.

5. Read an advertisement in the paper to find a good bicycle you can buy.

6. Read reviews for popular movies.

Writing in class, in English

1. Write an advertisement to sell an old bike.

2. Write down the instructions for your favorite hobby.

3. Write a report on your favorite animal and its habits.

4. Write a story.

5. Write a letter to a friend.

6. Write a newspaper article.

7. Write the answers to a "fun" quiz from a magazine.

8. Write down a list of things you must do tomorrow.

Comprehension in class

1. Listen to instructions and complete a task.

2. Bake a cake if instructions were not in Kurdish.

3. Fill out an application form.

4. Take directions from an English speaker.

5. Understand an English movie.

Appendix B: Interview questions

1. *How do you feel about the teaching of CSs?*
2. *What is your perception of your own use of CSs?*
3. *How do you feel about the communicative tasks which you participated in during the training programme?*
4. *Do you think that the use of CSs helps you to be a good English speaker?*
5. *Which strategy you prefer to use? Why?*
6. *Do you use any CSs now that you did not use to use?*
7. *Do men and women use different CSs because of their gender?*
8. *Does the personality of the learner have any effect on his/her choices of CSs?*
9. *Do you think that age has any kind of effect on the choice of CSs?*
10. *Does culture have any effect on learner's choice of CSs?*
11. *Do you think that your relationship with your teacher has some effect on your choice of CSs?*