The Impact of Using Asking for Clarification and Circumlocution Speaking Strategies on Enhancing the Speaking Skill of EFL Students

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Abstract

This study mainly aimed at investigating the impact of teaching the asking for clarification and circumlocution speaking strategies on enhancing students' speaking ability. In addition, it investigated the impact of teaching asking for clarification and circumlocution speaking strategies on students' use of other speaking strategies. Finally, it aimed at finding the correlation between language proficiency and students' use of the taught speaking strategies. Sixty-two 10_{th} graders at Noba Secondary School for Girls, a government high school, Palestine, participated in the study. Their native language is Arabic. They were divided into an experimental group comprised of thirty-one students and a control group consisted of thirty-one students. The experimental group had training on using two speaking strategies, namely asking for clarification and circumlocution which lasted over a semester. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data which were collected through pre and post questionnaires and pre and post tests showed that the use of asking for clarification strategy enhanced students' speaking skill. However, students' speaking skill was not enhanced through the use of circumlocution strategy. In addition, there were no significant differences between the experimental and control group in their use of different speaking strategies after teaching asking for clarification and circumlocution speaking strategies. However, message reduction and alteration strategies and social-affective strategies were reported to be the most significantly used strategies by the experimental group. Furthermore, the results showed that there was a strong correlation between learners' proficiency level and their strategy use. Finally, the study came with a number of recommendations.

Keywords

asking for clarification, circumlocution, speaking strategies

1. Introduction and Background

For decades, Grammar Translation method and vocabulary drills have been prevalent in EFL classrooms. Later, a considerable number of studies showed that knowledge of syntax is not enough for developing communication skill. This led to the rise of the approach that focuses more on communication; the communicative approach. It is not only to express one's self, but also to get others comprehend. Since the main goal of communication is to transfer information, this transference should be clear. Unfortunately, speakers, especially foreign learners may not get their message across to the interlocutor. Students may be good in writing, reading and listening, but they may not speak for two minutes without having linguistic difficulties which prevent them from conveying their communicative goal. EFL learners' inefficiency to communicate in English is due to several reasons. It could be because of meagerness of vocabulary to express ideas, shyness or absence of confidence, unavailability of environment to practice the language, or lack of some strategies that help to maintain a conversation (Nguyet & Mai, 2012). Specifically, Palestinian learners have little chance to practice speaking (Farrah, 2011). Speaking skill is neglected, although the Palestinian curriculum is based on the communicative approach which considers interaction the main aim of language learning. However, educators are looking for ways that help learners overcome such difficulties. So, language strategy use may be a possible solution. That is, learners can use speaking strategies to keep the flow of their conversations and the training on using these strategies may make them as a part of their repertoire to use them later in other situations. Many scholars advocate the use of speaking strategies such as (Ugla, Adnan, & Abidin, 2013a; Nguyet & Mai, 2012; Alibakhshi & Padiz, 2011; Tavakoli, Dastjerdi, & Esteki, 2011; Tian, 2011; Nakatani, 2010; Khamwan, 2007; Lam, 2006; Campillo, 2006; Kendall, Jarvie, & Doll et al., 2005). For example, Ugla, Adnan and Abidin (2013a) suggested incorporating speaking strategies into the English education program at the various levels to improve the learners speaking ability.

To be more specific, tenth grade students at Noba Secondary School face certain communication problems. This may be because their communicative competence is not developed enough to achieve their communicative goal. Therefore, this study aims at investigating whether the use of speaking strategies, especially asking for clarification and circumlocution may enhance their speaking ability. In addition, it examines the impact of teaching these speaking strategies on students' use of some speaking strategies. Finally, it seeks to investigate whether the learners' language proficiency level correlates with their use of the taught strategies.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although the Palestinian curriculum is based on the communicative approach, speaking remains a challenging skill in many Palestinian classrooms. This is due to various reasons: 1) The large number of students in class, 2) Teachers' inability to speak fluently, 3) Students' little opportunity to use the target language outside the classroom. Therefore, the main problem of EFL Palestinian learners is the inability to handle a communicative situation. The inability in handling a communicative situation may gradually lead learners to reach a state of hatred to learn English. Even proficient learners are

sometimes unable to communicate their thoughts because they do not have access to the required word or expression due to failure in the memory or any other reasons such as fatigue and linguistic deficiency (Tovakoli, Dastjerdi, & Esteki, 2011). Hence, "if the students know some communication strategies, their reactions will be different. Even if they do not know exactly what to say, they will try to find ways to get close to the answer" (Ogane, 1998, p. 1). The use of speaking strategies makes them feel secured that they try to keep their conversation. It is believed that more emphasis on teaching speaking strategies helps learners manage communication problems inside and outside the classroom by providing them with the necessary strategies that help them overcome linguistic difficulties (Ogane, 1998).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The current study attempts to serve a number of purposes. They are as follows:

1) To investigate the impact of using asking for clarification on enhancing 10th grade students' speaking ability.

2) To investigate the impact of using circumlocution on enhancing 10th grade students' speaking ability.

3) To investigate the impact of speaking strategy-training on students' use of some speaking strategies.

4) To investigate whether there is a correlation between learners' language proficiency level and the use of the taught speaking strategies among the 10th grade students.

1.3 Research Questions

Thus, the present study investigates the following research questions:

1) What's the impact of using asking for clarification on enhancing 10th grade students' speaking ability?

2) What is the impact of using circumlocution on enhancing 10th grade students' speaking ability?

3) What is the impact of speaking-strategy training on students' use of some speaking strategies?

4) To what extent there is a correlation between the language proficiency level and learners' use of the taught speaking strategies among the 10th grade students?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is among the first to be conducted in the Palestinian schools. In addition, due to the few studies that investigate the impact of using speaking strategies to develop the speaking skill, the need to draw the practitioners' attention to the importance of using speaking strategies to enhance the speaking skill and to develop the students' autonomy, this study comes to fill such a gap. Furthermore, the results will help the practitioners to encourage the use of speaking strategies and to have them as a part in the textbooks and embed them implicitly and explicitly within the classroom activities. Finally, this study provides an alternative way of teaching speaking to Palestinian students.

1.5 Definitions of Key Words

1) Speaking strategies are those devices used by students when face a communication problem, they use to continue their communication rather than give up (Dornyei, 1995).

2) Circumlocution: "is the alternative means of expression that allows the learner and the interlocutor

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to work to achieve an agreement on meaning through the use of a description'' (Ismail & Kaur, 2012, p. 2).

3) Asking for clarification or clarification requests: are a mean an interlocutor uses to explain what's said (Chiang & Lai, 2010).

4) English Language Proficiency

This refers to the students' English language proficiency as it is determined by the students' grades in the English subject.

a. Intermediate Students

The term refers to those students who had average grades in the English subject ranging from 70-99.

b. Low Proficiency Students

The term refers to those students who had average grades in English ranging below 70.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Approach

The current study follows an experimental approach that is designed to offer answers to the main research questions and provides more information related to the correlation between students' proficiency level and their use of speaking strategies.

2.2 Participants

The sample of population for the study was tenth grade students in the public schools in Palestine who were enrolled in 2013/2014. The sample contained sixty-two students in Noba Secondary school for Girls at Northern Hebron: Thirty-one students for the experimental group and thirty-one for the control group. At that stage, the students had studied English for ten years in public schools. Most of them were of the same age. So, it could be assumed that they had similar cultural and educational background.

This particular sample was used based on some considerations. First, the students have been learning English for ten years which makes it satisfying to choose them for the sample since they are not too young to handle the strategies in hand. For example, circumlocution strategy requires a satisfied linguistic level to be used. Therefore, it is easier to be used by advanced learners than by younger ones. These students were categorized into two groups, intermediate and low-ability, based on their average grade in English subject in the previous year. The intermediate group consisted of students who obtained average grades above 70 in English and the low-ability group comprised of students whose grades in English were lower than 70. The students of the same proficiency level were allowed to choose their own partner and decide between themselves which role they wanted to play.

2.3 Research Instruments

Data for this study was collected by quantitative and qualitative methods. The researchers used multi methodologies. First of all, it is an experimental study which depends on collecting information through two main instruments: a questionnaire, and a test. Second, it investigates the differences

between learners' use of speaking strategies before and after the treatment and their speaking performance before and after implementing the experiment for the experimental and control groups. Not only does this study investigate the differences between the control and experimental groups before and after conducting the study in their strategy use and oral performance, but also it investigates whether other variables such as proficiency level correlates with their strategy use. Finally, the results are discussed and illustrated in light of the studies reviewed in the second chapter of this study.

2.4 Self-Report Questionnaire

The questionnaire was prepared to get the quantitative data for the study. It was designed to investigate the learners, use of speaking strategies in general. It was administered to the participants in the experimental and control groups before and after conducting the study. It has been adopted and adapted from the article "Developing an oral communication strategy inventory" by (Nakatani, 2006; Dörnyei, 1995). The questionnaire consisted of twenty items. Eighteen items were adopted from Nakatani's oral communication strategy inventory and two were adopted from Dörnyei's classification (See Appendix 1). The questionnaire was designed in a way that included two sections. In section A, students were asked about their backgrounds: their age, average, class and study years (See Table 1). Section B included twenty statements that view students' preference of speaking strategies when they face a communication problem. Table 1 shows the variables of the sample.

Table 1. The Demographic Characteristics of the Sample Include Proficiency Level (the GPA), Age and the Class

Variables	Number	Percentage	Missing values
proficiency level (GPA)			
90-99	8	13%	--------
80-89	8	13%	
70-79	4	6.5%	
60-69	12	19%	
50-59	13	21%	
Less than 50	17	27.5%	
age			
15	44	71%	
16	18	29%	
class			
(A)	31	50%	-----------------
(B)	31	50%	

2.5 The Tests

The researchers based their speaking tests on previous studies (Nakatani, 2012, 2010; Lam, 2006; Lam & Wong, 2000; Paribakht, 1986). The tests were accepted by two instructors with minor grammatical modifications in task one and three. The tests that were used to collect the data were two speaking tasks. The first task was three-conversation task which was primarily dedicated to elicit the use of asking for clarification strategy. The other one was a description of ten pictures which was used to elicit the use of circumlocution.

2.5.1 Speaking Pre-Tests

The pre-tests were administered to guarantee that the two groups had the same speaking competence. The pre-tests consisted of two tasks: The first task was three-conversation tasks (See Appendix 2). Whereas, the second task was a description of ten pictures which was used in many studies such as (Nakatani, 2012; Nakatani, 2005; Lam, 2004; Berry-Bravo, 1993) (See Appendix 3). In the former task, the researchers designed problem-solving tasks to elicit the use of clarification requests strategy. The first task was about their delayed flight in which students in pairs asked and talked about the reasons that made the flight be delayed and tried to find a solution for this emergency with the officer. The second task is that a witness of an accident. The students give a description of the accident doer, victim and place to the police officer. Third task is an interview between a well-known character and a reporter. For example, the character will be asked about things he or she did to be admired. Also, things he should do or have done. Each pair of the same level was given five minutes to prepare the role play. After that, the students, conversations were video-taped.

However, the second part of the pre-test was a description of ten pictures (See Appendix 3) which was taken from everyday real life. The pictures were divided into abstract names, concrete objects and verbs. The ten pictures exemplified the following actions: Saw the wood and plough the earth, whereas, the word "depression" represents abstract nouns. On the other hand, pictures such as a ladle nail clipper, bucket, fire extinguisher and earrings represent concrete nouns. This task was written due to time limitation. Students were given ten minutes to complete the task individually.

2.5.2 Speaking Post-Test

After the treatment, a post-test was conducted on the experimental and control group to investigate the impact of training on learners' oral production. The participants did the same tasks they did in the pre-test. A transcription was made for learners' speech. The aim of this transcription is to analyze learners' speech in terms of fluency, vocabulary, grammar and the use of speaking strategies to see if there is any improvement of learners' oral production after strategy training. Two raters, who were the researchers themselves and an English teacher who has BA degree in teaching English, independently assessed the tests to guarantee reliability of evaluation. After comparing the two ratings which were nearly the same, the mean of the scores was considered.

2.6 Validity of the Instruments

The researchers investigated the validity of their instruments through submitting them to experienced EFL instructors who gave their comments which the researchers took them in consideration. Based on

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the referees' comments' the instruments were revised.

2.7 Reliability of the Instruments

To find out the reliability of the post questionnaire that was used in this study in order to investigate the students' use of speaking strategies, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability was calculated and the results showed that the questionnaire that was used in this study was reliable with 0.75, which indicates an acceptable degree of internal consistency. Accordingly, the questionnaire is considered as a reliable instrument.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Overview

This chapter presents the results of the study. The results of the questionnaire are discussed in light of the learners' perceptions before and after implementing the study. The following section presents the findings and discussions related to the research questions of the study. The results of the questionnaire are presented first, and then they are followed by the results of the post test.

3.2 Quantitative Analysis

3.2.1 Question One: What is the Impact of Using Asking for Clarification on Enhancing 10_{th} Grade Students' Speaking Skill?

The researchers decided to run a t-test for each strategy separately to see if the learners showed any improvement in their speaking skill due to their use of asking for clarification or circumlocution as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Learners were instructed on the use of asking for clarification requests. They were given a chance to practice using this strategy over one school semester. At the end of the semester, the learners were given three speaking task-tests to both the experimental and the control groups. The results were as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. A T-Test for the Results of Asking for Clarification Post-Test Due to Groups

post-test	group	number	means	Std deviation	t	Sig.
Asking for clarification	Control group	31	3.98	2.31	2.0	0.041
strategy	Experimental group	31	5.18	2.21	84	

The Table shows that the experimental group's speaking skill was enhanced due to their use of asking for clarification strategy. Experimental group students were able to keep their conversations on through the use of asking for clarification. This is in accordance with (Teng, 2012c; Nguyet & Mai, 2012; Alibakhshi & Padiz, 2011; Lam & Wong, 2000; Gabrielatos, 1992; Lloyd, 1992).

However, this result contrasts with (Hie & Lin, 2008; Prinyajarn, 2007) who found that the participants slightly negotiate meaning through the use of clarification requests.

This strategy is easier for students to use since it does not require high language proficiency. A learner needs just to use a memorized expression such as "What?" "Could you explain?" to indicate misunderstanding or inability to carry on a verbal plan. Their use of such expressions motivates them and helped them to get rid of the feeling of embarrassment which results of not being able to carry on a conversation.

3.2.2 Question Two: What is the Impact of Using Circumlocution on Enhancing 10_{th} Grade Students' Speaking Skill?

To answer this question, learners were instructed on the use of circumlocution. They were given a chance to practice using this strategy over one school semester. At the end of the semester, the learners were given a picture-description speaking task-test to both the experimental and the control groups. The results were as seen in Table 3.

Table 3. A T-Test for the Results of Circumlocution Post-Test Due to Groups

strategy	group	N	mean	Std deviation	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Post circumlocution	Experimental	31	4.32	2.83	1.350	0.182
	Control	31	3.40	2.51		

The Table shows that there are no significant differences between the experimental group and control group in their speaking skill due to the use of circumlocution strategy. It is worth mentioning that there is slight improvement of the two groups' scores as a result of using circumlocution after treatment. However, looking at the mean scores between the two groups, it appears that the experimental groups mean scores are higher than the control groups. This is in accordance with (Prinyajarn, 2007) and (Salomone & Marsal, 1997) who found no significant difference between the groups due to their use of circumlocution. However, this result is in contrast with (Campillo, 2006; Chen, 2006; Jourdan, 2000) who found that teaching circumlocution improved students' speaking skill.

This strategy requires high language proficiency. Since the participants' English proficiency is so weak, they are not able to use this strategy as a means of overcoming linguistic deficiencies.

3.2.3 Question Three: What Is the Impact of Speaking-Strategy Training on Students' General Use of Speaking Strategies?

First of all, the researchers examined the impact of teaching asking for clarification and circumlocution speaking strategies on the experimental and control groups' general use of the strategies after treatment. To see whether there is an impact of speaking strategy training on tenth graders' general use of speaking strategies, a t-test was carried out to find the answers of the post questionnaire between the control and experimental groups. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. A T-Test for the Post-General Strategy-Use in All of the Questionnaire Items Due to Group

		Group statistic			Independent samples test		
		N	Mean	Std deviation	df	t	Sig(tailed)
group	Experimental	31	3.51	0.63	60	-0.177	0.860
	Control	31	3.54	0.46			

The result of Table 4 shows that there is no a significant difference between the two groups at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) of their use of speaking strategies. Their means are (E = 3.51, C = 3.54), which indicate that teaching asking for clarification and circumlocution do not affect the experimental group general use of speaking strategies. This is in accordance with Nunan (1997). However, this is in contrast to the results of (Melendez, Zarala, & Mendez, 2014; Lin, 2013; Nguyet & Mai, 2012; Teng, 2012c; Kongsom, 2009; Prinyajarn, 2007; Nakatani, 2005) who found that learners' use of speaking strategies was affected by treatment and consequently their use of the strategies increased. That is, after strategy-training students used speaking strategies more frequently than they used before treatment. Treatment aroused their awareness of the existence and importance of these strategies. Consequently, they showed positive attitudes towards the use of these strategies.

Additionally, Table 4 shows a medium use of speaking strategies by EFL Palestinian learners. This is in line with the results of (Ugla, Adnan, & Abidin, 2013b; Al-Shabou, Asassfeh, & Al-Shboul, 2010) and Khalil (2005) who found that Palestinian EFL learners have a medium use of strategies.

Strategy-training did not increase students' reported use of speaking strategies. This might be attributed to cultural factor. That is, Palestinian students rarely use English outside the classroom. Therefore, they have never been in a need to use these strategies in real life situations. They do not appreciate the importance of the use of these strategies as they do not try to speak English outside or inside the classroom.

Then, the researchers investigated the impact of teaching asking for clarification and circumlocution speaking strategies on the experimental group's use of individual speaking strategies compared to the control group. A t-test was carried out to analyze the answers of the students, use of speaking categories after treatment. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5. A T-Test for the Post Use of Speaking Categories

Speaking strategy Category	group	N	Mean	Std deviation	df	t	Sig.	Rank
Message reduction and alteration strategies	Experimental	31	4.42	0.807	60	1.470	0.029	1
	control	31	4.03	1.224				
Negotiation for meaning while speaking	Experimental	31	4.10	1.062	58	0.665	0.377	2
	Control	31	3.93	0.868				
Social-affective strategies	Experimental	31	3.84	1.003	60	1.004	0.004	3
	Control	31	3.52	1.480				
Attempt to think in English strategy	Experimental	31	3.74	1.290	60	1.548	0.860	4
	Control	31	3.23	1.334				
Nonverbal strategies	experimental	31	3.63	1.245	59	-1.095-	0.309	5
	Control	31	3.97	1.140				
Code-switching	Experimental	31	3.55	1.234	58	-1.353-	0.549	6
	Control	31	3.97	1.149				
Circumlocution	Experimental	31	3.52	1.318	60	1.173	0.980	7
	Control	31	3.13	1.284				
Accuracy-oriented strategy	Experimental	31	3.40	1.192	59	-0.783-	0.075	8
	Control	31	3.61	0.919				
Fluency-oriented strategy	Experimental	31	3.27	1.285	58	-1.393-	0.624	9
	Control	31	3.70	1.119				
Message abandonment strategies	Experimental	31	3.18	1.056	57	0.172	0.924	10
	Control	31	3.13	1.147				

Table 5 shows that after treatment, message reduction and alteration strategies and social-affective strategies were reported to be the most significantly used strategies by the experimental group. It is also worth mentioning that the experimental group showed high use of message reduction and alteration strategies, negotiation for meaning while speaking, social-affective strategies and attempt to think in English strategy after treatment. The least used strategy was message abandonment strategies.

This is in accordance with (Nakatani, 2012; Teng, 2012b; Huang, 2010) who found that message reduction and alteration strategies and social-affective strategies as well as negotiation for meaning increased after treatment.

Regarding message reduction and alteration strategies, figures show that there is a significant difference between the groups at (α = 0.029). Their means are (E = 4.42, C = 4.04), which means that the treatment affected the experimental group positively. Their reported use of message reduction and alteration strategies improved.

Concerning social-affective strategies, results show that there is a significant difference between them at (α = 0.004). Their means are (E = 3.84, E = 3.52), which means that the treatment affected the experimental group positively in this category. Their reported use of social-affective strategies was enhanced. This is in line with Prinyajarn (2007) who found that the students used more pause fillers (social-affective strategies) than circumlocution. In addition, Gabrielatos (1992) reported that his participants became risk takers (social-affective strategies) after their strategy-training despite of their lexical and grammatical deficiencies. This is also in line with (AL-Shabou, Asassfeh, & Alshboul, 2010; Chuanchaisit & Prapphal, 2009).

Students' increased use of social-affective strategies after strategy training could be related to students becoming more confident to speak. They became more able to control their emotions and consequently they were ready to take risk while speaking English. In addition, teaching English in Palestinian classrooms focuses on accuracy. Teachers always focus on producing accurate language. They are intolerant with students' mistakes. Learners are always afraid of committing mistakes. Hence, they will not risk talking in English, consequently, they will not be put in a situation that requires the use of speaking strategies.

On the other hand, the control group showed high use of message reduction and alteration strategies, code switching, nonverbal strategies, negotiation for meaning while speaking and fluency-oriented strategy. Whereas, the control group reported that the least used strategies were message abandonment strategy and circumlocution strategies with (E = 3.18, C = 3.13) and (E = 3.52, C = 3.13) respectively.

Although there is no significant difference between the control and expereiment groups in their reported use of circumlocution after treatment, it's apparent that the experimental group' reported use of circumlocution slightly improved after treatment. This is in line with Kongsom (2009) who found that students' frequent use of circumlocution incresed after treatment. In addition, the results show that there is no a significant difference of negotiation for meaning while speaking between the two groups although this strategy gets high use by the experimental group. This means that the experimental group has positive attitudes towards the use of this strategy. The result is in line with (Yaman, Irgin, & Kavasoglu, 2013; Teng, 2012b; Nakatani, 2012) who found that learners preferred using negotiation for meaning.

3.2.4 Question Four: What is the Correlation Between Language Proficiency and the Use of the Taught Speaking Strategies Among the 10_{th} Grade Students at Noba Secondary School?

To investigate the correlation between learners, proficiency level and speaking strategy use, a t-test was carried out to see the impact of students' proficiency level on the use of speaking strategies as seen in Table 6.

Table 6. A T-Test for the Correlation Between Language Proficiency and the Taught Speaking Strategy Use Due to Groups

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.800[a]	.640	.634	2.92173

The Table shows that (R) is (.800a) and this is an indicator that the correlation between intermediate and low students in their use of the taught speaking strategies is strong. The result is in agreement with (Ugla, Adnan, & Abidin, 2013b; Abu Anawas, 2012; Nakatani, 2005; Khalil, 2005; Shmais, 2003; Berry-Bravo, 1993; Paribakht, 1985). However, this result contrasts with (Razmjoo & Ardekani, 2011; Huang, 2010; Khan, 2010, Lam, 2006) who found no clear relationship between strategy use and proficiency level. This is because "external factors such as task or internal factors such as learner's style may also be significant in determining strategy use" (Khan, 2010, p.49).

3.2.5 Experimental Group Questionnaire Results

Question one: What is the impact of teaching asking for clarification and circumlocution speaking strategies on the experimental group reported use of speaking strategies in general?

After the treatment, the experimental group students were asked to complete the strategy speaking questionnaire again to investigate any differences in their report of use of speaking strategies. A paired-test was carried out to find the answers of the experimental group. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. A Paired-Test of the Experimental Group Use of Speaking Strategies

Experimental group	Mean	N	Std deviation	Sig.
Pre questionnaire	3.43	31	0.28	0.508
Post questionnaire	3.51	31	0.63	

As shown in Table 3, the overall mean score for the reported speaking strategies in the pre questionnaire was 3.43 (SD = 0.28) while the overall mean score for the reported speaking strategies in the post questionnaire was 3.51 (SD = 0.63). The mean scores in the post-questionnaire indicate that there is no statistically difference between pre and post speaking strategies questionnaire mean scores of speaking strategy use. This means that teaching speaking strategies does not affect the participants' use of speaking strategies generally. This result is in line with Nunan (1997) who found that the effect of strategy training on strategy-use isn't so clear.

To see the impact of teaching speaking strategies on individual speaking categories, a paired test was carried out as shown in Table 8.

Table 8. A Paired Test of the Experimental Group Use of Individual Speaking Strategies

Speaking strategies categories	Questionnaire	N	Mean	Std deviation	Sig.(2-tailed)
Attempt to think in English	pre	31	3.19	0.94	0.024
	post	31	3.74	1.29	
Message reduction and alteration strategies	pre	31	3.41	1.39	0.062
	post	31	2.70	1.02	
Message abandonment strategy	pre	31	2.61	1.28	0.458
	post	31	2.93	1.66	
Accuracy-oriented strategy	pre	31	3.06	1.15	0.147
	post	31	2.61	1.14	
Fluency-oriented strategy	Pre	31	3.74	1.52	0.484
	post	31	3.45	1.62	
Nonverbal strategies while speaking	pre	31	3.48	1.38	0.410
	post	31	3.80	1.55	
Negotiation for meaning while speaking strategies	pre	31	3.35	1.22	0.014
	post	31	4.25	1.36	
Social-affective strategies	pre	31	3.06	1.09	0.009
	post	31	3.96	1.66	
Code-switching	pre	31	4.22	0.88	0.029
	post	31	3.54	1.23	
Circumlocution	pre	31	2.90	1.16	0.044
	post	31	3.51	1.31	

Table 8, shows that speaking strategy-instruction affected the experimental group use of negotiation for meaning while speaking (e.g., asking for clarification), social-affective strategy, attempt to think in English and circumlocution significantly. This result is in line with Nakatani (2012) and Nunan (1997) who stated that strategy-instruction improved learners' knowledge of the investigated strategies. This appeared in the current study results in which learners reported use of the under investigation strategies (circumlocution and asking for clarification) improved after training. In addition, the training was beneficial in that it changed the participants' attitudes towards unacceptable strategies such as code switching significantly. The frequency use of this strategy decreased after treatment. The subject had negative attitudes towards this strategy. They were aware of the existence of more useful and acceptable speaking strategies than code switching. This is in line with Alibakhshi and Padiz (2011) who found that learners reduced their use of avoidance and language switch strategies after training to use appeal for assistance and circumlocution. It is worth noting that, in the pre-questionnaire the participants showed medium use of negotiation for meaning, social affective strategy, attempt to think

in English and nonverbal strategy which changed after treatment to be a high use. That is, teaching asking for clarification and circumlocution strategies affected the participants use of some strategies positively. The frequency of use of these two strategies increased after the treatment.

This result contrasts with Dornyei (1995) who found that no significant improvement of the quantity of circumlocution after the treatment. Khenoune (2012) also found that circumlocution and appeal for assistance are the least frequently used by Algerian students.

3.3 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis supports the findings of the quantitative analysis. This can be seen in the light of analyzing some extracts of the participants' performance in the tests.

3.3.1 Actual Use of Asking for Clarification

In the pre-test speaking tasks, students did not interact with one another. Most of their ideas were not discussed thoroughly. In addition, the pre-training tasks rarely had any of the taught strategies. This is in line with Melendez, Zarala and Mendez (2014) who found that students did not use any speaking strategies before the treatment (as seen in the following pre-test example).

In the following extract, taken from a pre-training recording, a student had assumed the role of an interviewer and another a famous character talked about the famous character's achievements, regrets and about him/herself.

Lubna: hi, I'm Lubna Shrouf. I'm TV presenter in the president program. I'll ask Yassir some questions.

Lubna: Good morning.

Layan: Good morning.

Lubna: you with me on the line. I'll ask you some questions.

Layan: yes.

Lubna: When you are become a president?

Layan: I become a president in Palestine in 1994.

Lubna: yeah, what are you doing for the refugee?

Layan: I I makes some I makes some money for the refugees and build house for the refugees in Lebanon and the Syria in the Palestine.

Lubna: That's good either. What's your opinion of Israel?

Layan: it bad people and talk (took) something don't have and killed the children and human.

Lubna: thanks for you to be with me on line.

In this pre-training extract, students did not have much interaction with one another. They did not show willingness to negotiate. They just responded when their turn came. This is because students lack the necessary vocabulary to express themselves. These results showed that students rarely showed cooperative behavior before treatment. That is, they rarely used asking for clarification. However, after treatment, learners' interaction had improved after treatment. There were more attempts of asking for

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clarification strategy in comparison to the pre-speaking test. The following example shows students' use of asking for clarification strategy after the treatment.

Lubna: Good evening everybody. I'm TV presenter in the president program. I want to meet Yassir Arafat now. Hello, Yassir Arafat. How are you?

Layan: Hello, I'm fine and I happy to meet you.

Lubna: thanks thanks Mr. Yassir . I'd ask you some questions.

Layan: yes, welcome.

Lubna: When did you become a president for Palestine?

Layan: I become a president for Palestine in 1994.

Lubna: Until you become a president what would you do for Palestine?

Layan: I I would give Palestine peace and freedom.

Lubna: You would give Palestine peace and freedom. That's good. **Why? (asking for clarification)**

Layan: Because I feel the Palestinian is poor and so closed.

Lubna: That's sadly. What do about poor Palestinian people out Palestine?

Layan: Oh, I give a lot of money to the poor people and the refugee in Lebanon, Jordan to build a houses and school.

Lubna: That's so good. Where did you live before become president?

Layan: Sorry. I don't hear you. **Can you repeat again**? (**asking for clarification**)

Lubna: Where did you live before become president?

Layan: I'm lived in royal home in Palestine but I lived another countries like Tunis and Jordan and in……… a country north Palestine.

Lubna: **Do you mean Lebanon? (asking for clarification)**

Layan? Yes, Beirut in Lebanon.

Lubna: Yes, thanks for your meeting. Goodbye

Layan: Yes, welcome.

Analysis of the post-training transcript of the same pair revealed some evidence of asking for clarification strategy which had not been found in their pre-training recording. As seen in the example, Lubna used an asking for clarification strategy in her talk when she stated "do you mean Lebanon?" and Layan adjusted her response according to Lubna's request. The students supported each other by providing the intended word here (Lebanon). On the other use of asking for clarification in this extract, Layan asked for clarification through asking Lubna to repeat what she had said. Although this type of asking for clarification does not serve the exchanged meaning, it serves to maintain the flow of the conversation. The use of asking for clarification helped the interlocutors keep the conversation on. Also, it is noticed that the post extract is longer than the pre extract. In addition, although this extract is full of grammatical mistakes, the interlocutors have succeeded in delivering their message. In another example, the use of asking for clarification is apparent.

Deema: Welcome, tonight we have popular man. He's brave, determined and responsible. He's Palestinian. He's Yassir Arafat. Welcome Sir.

Ola: Thanks for this beautiful introduction. I'm very happy to be in this famous show.

Deema: Let's start, shall we?

Ola: Ok, let's go on. I'm ready.

Deema: You start your life an engineer. Let's talk about that.

Ola: I born in Cairo and I study engineering in Cairo University. After that, I go back to Palestine.

Deema: How did you be a president?

Ola: First of all I worked in PLO. I work hard for the Palestinian and for Palestine. I get love from people.

Deema: **What do you mean of "people"?**

Ola: The Arab people and some of European people

Deema: So what do you want?

Ola: Like a Palestinian. I want to come refugees back, freedom to Palestine for the whole Palestine. I want to remove the settlements in West bank and Gaza Strip.

In the above extract, the students were able to build in some requests for clarification. Deema for example, appealed directly for clarification from Ola by indicating non-understanding in "what do you mean of people?" Subsequently, Ola clarified herself with "the Arab people and some of European people". The post-training extract indicates an improvement in students, interaction because this is in contrast to their behavior before the training. They simply took turn to ask questions and answer them. On the contrary, they were able to ask questions to clarify ambiguities, and there was cooperation by clarifying one's ambiguities.

The results revealed that the practice of asking for clarification strategy could help students in a way that made them more confident when they used the taught expressions to bridge a linguistic gap during their conversation. Based on the researchers, experience, it was noticed that in the pre-training the participants refused or were obliged to try to speak. However, after they were taught expressions related to this strategy, they volunteered to speak.

3.3.2 The Actual Use of Circumlocution

The analysis of the participants' descriptions in the second task revealed that most students either in the control group or the experimental group were able to circumlocute. This appears in the following episodes taken from their descriptions.

An extract from intermediate level students' (control group)

Malak: It's a material, small material. That is used to cut nails. We often use it in our school when our nails tall.

Sarah: It used to cut nails as you said. It is like made of iron and material.

Experimental group (intermediate level students-pre-circumlocution)

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Deema: We use this tool to cut our neels (nails) to and it's kind of cleaned.

Ola: When the neels is long?

Deema: Cut it, yes

Ola: I get it.

The above extracts that are taken from the intermediate level students' speech in the two groups show that they were able to use circumlocution. This means that EFL learners are familiar with this strategy, but there is a need to draw their attention to use it.

Extracts are taken from low level students' descriptions

Control group (low level)

Mehad: It is in girls. It is in ears to your home (*haflat*: Arabic word for parties).

Refqa: It's ears. It beautiful people?

Mehad: yeah.

Refqa: yes.

Experimental group (Low level)

Isra': My see in girls the ear

Siren: What's used?

Isra': Girls use to the in happy. Small beautiful.

Sireen: They use the ear?

Isra': Yes.

The above extracts which are taken from low-level students' speech show that both the experimental and control group students were able to convey their message through the use of circumlocution. However, their use was not appropriate. They were not able to give successful descriptions.

In the following episodes, it appeared that learners' use of circumlocution slightly improved.

(intermediate level students-post circumlocution use)

Deema: It is a tool we use it to cut our nails. Like this. To cut our nails. It is made from iron, iron, yes.

Ola: To cut the extra nails to make the fingers more beautiful.

Deema: Yes, yes it part of cleaning.

(Low-level students-post circumlocution)

Experimental group (low level)

Isra: Use in ear, in happy.

Siren: Any color? Many color?

Isra: It's.

Siren:What's color?

Isra: Not color.

Siren: Any other color? Small?

Isra: yes, small.

Siren: Beauty? Use ear.

Isra: yes.

Siren: The woman the ear?

Isra: The girls?

It appeared that students in the experimental group used circumlocution after treatment more appropriately. However, the students before treatment could not use the circumlocution strategy appropriately due to lack of knowledge of the circumlocution strategy. This strategy requires high linguistic level.

It's evident from the examples shown above that the ability of using circumlocution strategy improved after training as the students were able to use circumlocution more appropriately. The participants' message was delivered more comprehensibly than in the pre-circumlocution. Although there were a lot of grammatical mistakes, they were able to communicate the intended expression. However, the low-level experimental group students' use of circumlocution was more effective than that in the pre-circumlocution. The low-level experimental group somehow employed what they had been taught about circumlocution in their description.

4. Conclusion

Investigating the research questions shows that students' speaking ability was enhanced through the use of asking for clarification strategy. Asking for clarification had a positive impact on enhancing learners, communication skill. Moreover, students' frequency use of speaking strategies was not affected by strategy-training. Finally, it was found that there was a correlation between learners, proficiency level and frequency use of the taught speaking strategies.

5. Recommendations

The results of this study showed the effectiveness of using asking for clarification to improve learners' speaking skill. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1) Since the goal of EFL teaching and learning is to develop the communicative competence among students, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education should promote the development of strategic competence through designing activities that promote the use of some speaking strategies such as asking for clarification to develop EF learners, speaking skill.

2) Teachers should introduce speaking strategies to students and encourage their use. They should offer more time and activities for students to practice using the strategies to ensure using them appropriately and automatically.

3) Moreover, teachers should focus on low-ability students through providing them with activities to practice the use of strategies.

4) Teachers should start gradually with strategies that suit learners' proficiency level. For example, circumlocution as a speaking strategy should be introduced in later stages in learning to speak English.

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Recommendations for future research

1) Other studies should explore any other strategies that help students develop their speaking skill such as approximation.

2) Other studies should build a questionnaire that covers all of the speaking strategies that learners used when communicate to others. In other words, the used questionnaire in the current study focused on small range of speaking strategies, therefore, it is devisable that another questionnaire includes other speaking strategies that the current questionnaire did not pay attention to.

3) A replication of this study with another group of students at the same school or another school in Palestine may provide some more evidence about the impact of speaking strategy instruction.

4) Moreover, as the students in this study were put into pairs of similar proficiency levels to perform the role play task, it would also be interesting for further studies to put the students in mixed proficiency pairs for the role play task so that the different speaking strategies could be elicited.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Pre and Post Speaking Strategy Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure students' knowledge of speaking strategies.

Dear students,

This questionnaire is part of a research project on the use of communication strategies.

Please answer the questions. There is no right or wrong answer. Your answers are confidential. You have the right to refuse, to participate, at any time. However, your experiences and opinions are important, and will help us understand teaching from your point of view.

Section A

Personal information

Age	a. 15 c. 16
GPA	a. 90 -99 b. 89-80 c. 70-79 d. 60-69 e. 50 – less than 40
class	10$_{th}$ grade section (A / B)
Years of learning English	a. 6 years b. 9 years c. 10 years d. 11 years

Section B

A.   Indicate the extent to which you use the following items by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box using the scale given below.

1.   Never used 2. Rarely used 3. Sometimes used 4. Often used 5. Always used

	Speaking strategies	1	2	3	4	5
1	I think first of what I want to say in my native language and then construct the English sentence.					
2	I use words which are familiar to me.					
3	I reduce the message.					
4	I replace the original message with another message because of feeling incapable of executing my original intent.					
5	I abandon the execution of a verbal plan and just say some words when I don't know what to say.					
6	I pay attention to grammar during conversation.					
7	I take my time to express what I want to say.					
8	I pay attention to my pronunciation, rhythm and intonation.					
9	I use gestures and facial expressions if I can't communicate how to express myself.					
10	I correct myself when I notice that I have made a mistake.					
11	I repeat what I want to say until the listener understands.					
12	I make comprehension checks to ensure the listener understands what I want to say					
13	I try to use fillers when I cannot think of what to say.					
14	I leave a message unfinished because of some language difficulty.					
15	I don,t mind taking risks even though I might make mistakes.					
16	I use Arabic when I don't know the intended word during the conversation					
17	I describe or exemplify the object or action instead of using the appropriate target language item or structure					
18	I turn to the interlocutor for help					

1 2 3 4 5

Thank you for your collaboration

Appendix 2. Pre and Post Speaking Tasks (Conversation Tasks)

The impact of using asking for clarification and circumlocution on enhancing EFL 10th grade students' speaking ability.

Task (1)

Work in pairs, one student will be a passenger and the other will be the officer in the airport. You have a problem that is your flight was delayed. Tell the officer at the airport about this problem; try to find

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solutions with the officer for this problem.

Task (2)

You are going home from school, you have seen an accident. The driver did not stop. You will be the witness who will give description and details about the accident to the police officer about (the place, the vehicle, the causality and your feelings and opinions towards the accident and the whole situation).

Task (3)

Play a role of a famous character such as Yassir Arafat, or Sharoon). You will have a talk with a TV presenter to tell her about the field you are active in , about your achievements, things you regret that you did and things you think you should have done. Say what you think of the other opponent either Palestinians or Israelis.

Appendix 3. Circumlocution (Description Task)

5

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9. Praise(مدح)………………………………………………………………………

10. Thyroid gland (الغده الدرقية)………………………………………………

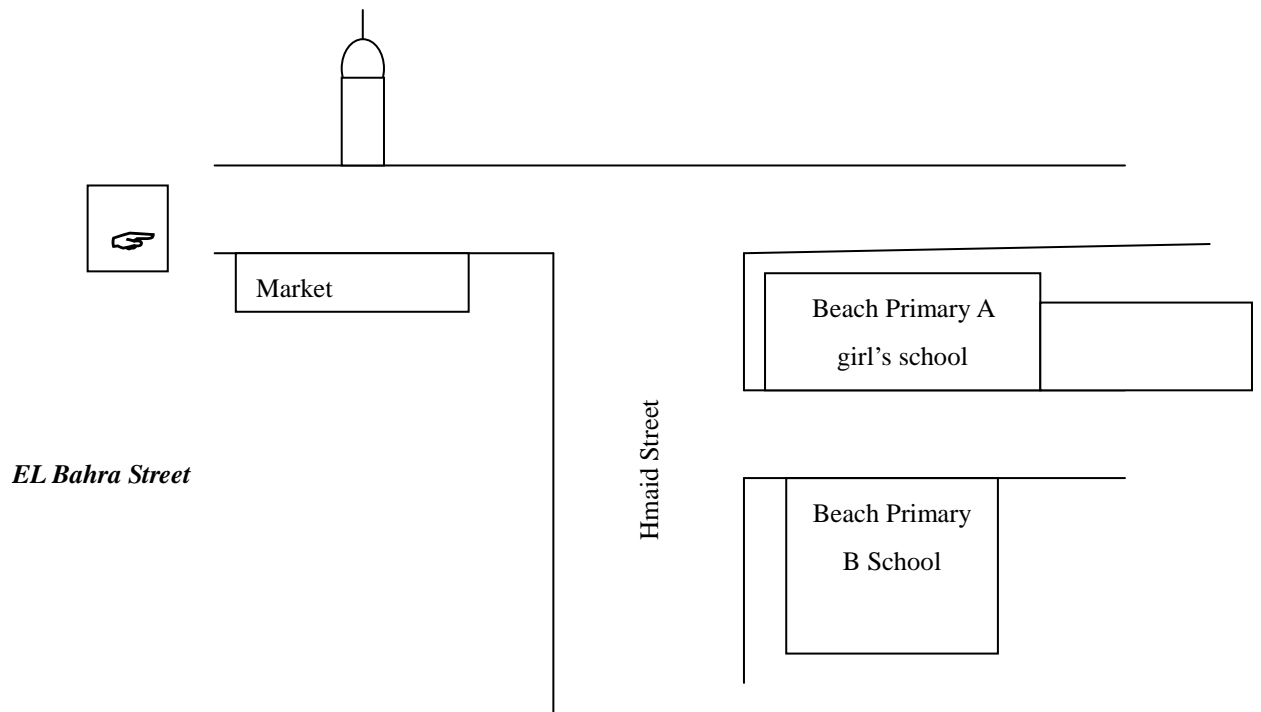**Appendix 4. Activities for Practising Asking for Clarification**

Activity 1: You and your group are the design team of a Palestinian toy manufacturer. You must make a proposal to your boss for a new best-selling toy. In your discussion, you should decide- the type of toy which you think will sell the best (including the name of the toy; whether it is for girls, boys or both; whether it is connected witha popular film, TV programme, comic book, etc.); 2- the price ofthe toy (or price range, if you are thinking of a series of toys);3 the location where the toy will be manufactured (in Palestine or in another country);You should also be prepared to give your boss reasons why you think this toy would be successful.

Activity 2: Your school has been given $1000 by a rich businessman who once attended the school.

The only stipulation is that the money is to be spent to build or improve sports facilities at the school in order to allow the students to enjoy a broader range of sports. You have to discuss how to spend the money, and to organize action to implement the final decision.

Activity: 3 is a task for giving directions which is adapted from English for Palestine ninth grade textbook

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Market

Beach Primary A

girl's school

Hmaid Street

EL Bahra Street

Beach Primary

B School

Appendix 5. Activities on the Use of Circumlocution

Game: Guess who am I?

The speaker has to tell the interlocutor description, and the interlocutor has to guess what has been described.

1) What do you want for your birthday?

2) What subject do you like the best?

3) What country do you want to visit?

Example: S1: Which season do you like the best?

S2: Well, I like July, August.

S1: You like summer

S2: yes.

Appendix 6: Activities to Practice the Use Asking for Clarification and Circumlocution

Name: _____

Descriptions: 1.

2.

3.

4.

5

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Name: _____

Descriptions: 1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Task 2

The teacher divides the class into teams: four teams consist of five students and two teams consist of six students. Then, using slips of paper, give each team a slip of paper includes one word, which they will not show to the other teams. After two minutes, working together to think how to describe the word, play begins. The team chooses one student to play on behalf of them. After the chosen student tells the other teams her team's definition of the given word, the other teams can ask the student for more clarification and then they write on a piece of paper their guessing of the intended word and handed their answers to the student to read them and see who gets the right answer. This game continues until all the teams take their turn and at the end the teacher who was recording the points for the winning teams, announces who is the winner.

Appendix 7: Some of the Participants' Production

Deema: sir, I think we should manufactured sponge pop toy.

Lubna: do you mean the sponge which we put the soap on it and clean the glass?

Deema: I mean sponge toy which the children which it on TV.

Duaa: why

Deema: because it very funny, famous and popular toy which it price 5 shekels and it price is not high.

Lubna: when we can manufactured it?

Deema: we can manufactured it in the world.

Lubna: I agree with you, but I think we should manufactured the strawberry shurcate toy.

Reman: what do you mean by strawberry shurcat?

Lubna: the toy which the girls love it and watch it on TV.

Areej: how much the price?

Lubna: just 2

Areej: when we can manufactured it?

Lubna: we can manufactured it in Jerusalem.

Doua: why?

Because very people visit it.

Areej: yes, we agree with sponge pop.

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