

Use of Oral Communication Strategies in English Language by Graduate Students in an International Context

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ABSTRACT

Students studying in international universities usually experience some difficulties and challenges when communication in English with students and people coming from different cultural and ethnic background. Nevertheless, to cope with challenges students may use Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs) but studies addressing these strategies in the international contexts have been rare. As such, this study was set out to identify a) the oral communication strategies used by the international students when communicating in English; b) to identify any possible differences in the use of OCSs used by students from different ethnic backgrounds; c) any possible gender differences in the use of OCSs used by the international students. The context of the study was Eastern Mediterranean University, Northern Cyprus, and the participants were 32 graduate (master's and PhD) students majoring in English Language Teaching (ELT) who were selected by convenience sampling who fell in five nationality groups (Turkish, Iranian, African, Iraqi & Others). This study adopted a mixed-method approach to address the questions under investigation. On the one hand the Oral Communication Strategy Inventory, adopted from Nakatani, provided quantitative data, and on the other hand, the oral communication task and semi-structured interview along with observation and the researcher's field notes were triangulated to provide qualitative data. The quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS software and descriptive statistics, t-test and ANOVA tests were performed to provide answer to the research questions. The findings of the current study indicated that *social affective*, *negotiation for meaning while speaking* and *message reduction and alteration* were the next most frequently reported speaking strategies and *negotiation for meaning while listening* and *nonverbal strategies while listening* were the most frequently reported listening strategies by the international students.

Comparing OCSs across different nationality groups showed that OCSs were not statistically significant across different nationality groups. However, gender differences were significant in two speaking strategies: *social affective* and *negotiating for meaning while speaking* with the females obtaining higher means than the males. The study yielded some important implications for practitioners, teachers and researchers who investigate this field of inquiry.

Keywords: Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs), English Language Teaching (ELT), Social Affective, negotiating for meaning

ÖZ

Uluslararası üniversitelerde eğitim gören öğrenciler, farklı kültürel ve etnik geçmişlere sahip kişilerle İngilizce dilinde iletişim kurarken bazı zorluklar ve sorunlar yaşar. Bu zorluklarla başa çıkmak için öğrenciler sözel iletişim stratejilerini kullanabilir; ancak uluslararası bağlamda sözel iletişim stratejileriyle ilgili yapılan çalışmaların sayısı oldukça azdır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma a) İngilizce dilinde iletişim kurarken uluslararası öğrencilerin kullandığı sözel iletişim stratejilerini, b) farklı etnik kökenlere sahip öğrencilerin sözel iletişim stratejileri kullanımındaki olası farklılıklarını ve c) uluslararası öğrenciler tarafından kullanılan sözel iletişim stratejilerinde olası cinsiyet farklılıklarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta bulunan Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi'nde, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi alanında eğitim gören 32 lisansüstü (yüksek lisans ve doktora) öğrencisi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Kolayda örneklem yöntemi ile seçilen katılımcılar, beş ana uyruk grubu (Türk, İranlı, Afrikalı, Iraklı ve Diğerleri) oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışmada kullanılan soruları yanıtlayabilmek üzere karma yöntem yaklaşımı benimsenmiştir. Nicel veriler için Nakatani tarafından geliştirilen Sözel İletişim Stratejisi Envanteri kullanılırken, nitel veriler için sözel iletişim görevi, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme, gözlem ve araştırmacının alan notları kullanılmıştır. Nicel veriler, SPSS yazılımı aracılığıyla ve betimleyici istatistikler ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sorularını yanıtlayabilmek için t-test ve ANOVA testleri uygulanmıştır. Mevcut araştırmanın bulgularına göre, *sosyal duygusal, konuşma sırasında anlam söyleşmesi* ile *mesaj eksiltme ve değiştirme*'nin uluslararası öğrenciler tarafından en çok rapor edilen konuşma stratejileri oldukları görülürken, *dinleme sırasında anlam söyleşmesi* ve *sözel olmayan stratejiler*'in en çok kullanılan dinleme stratejileri oldukları görülmüştür. Farklı uyruklu gruplar karşılaştırıldığında, sözel iletişim stratejileri

bağlamında farklı uyruklu gruplar arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark bulunamamıştır. Ancak, *sosyal duygusal* ve *konuşma sırasında anlam söyleşmesi* olmak üzere iki konuşma stratejisinde cinsiyete göre farklılık görülmüştür. Bu iki stratejide kadınların ortalamasının erkeklere kıyasla daha yüksek olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Bu çalışma; pratisyenler, eğitimciler ve bu alanda araştırma yapan araştırmacılar için önemli çıkarımlar sağlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sözel İletişim Stratejilerini (OSCs), İngilizce Dilinde İletişim (ELT), sosyal duygusal, konuşma sırasında anlam söyleşmesi

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/SYMBOLS

OCS:	Oral communication strategy
OSCI:	Oral communication strategy inventory
CS/CSs:	Communication strategy (strategies)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is arranged in five sections. The first two sections provide a background to the study and overview of the thesis. Section three states the problem under investigation. Then, the purpose of the study and research questions are presented in sections four and five, respectively. Then, significance of the study is explained in section six. Finally the key terms are defined in section seven.

1.1 Background to the Study

Students leaving their own countries in order to continue their studies at an international university usually have to be proficient user of the English language for their academic achievement since English is the language of instruction in most countries across the world. In addition to academic purposes, international students also need to use English language to communicate with their classmates, professors, and other individuals outside of the educational context. However, a large number of students experience many difficulties and challenges (e.g., Huang, 2004) mostly due to cultural differences and limited language proficiency.

Nevertheless, students try to find ways in order to cope with challenges raised by that situation. They usually use strategies, referred to as communication strategies (CSs) that compensate for their English language proficiency (e.g., Bialystok, 1990; Dörnyei, 1995; Oxford, 2001). In other words, CSs are defined as “the mutual attempts of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in a situation where the requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared” (Tarone, 1980, cited in Huang, 2010).

According to this definition, CSs actually refer to strategies that the interlocutors employ during the negotiation of meaning to compensate for the breakdowns so a shared understanding happens. Nakatani (2010) believes that "learners need these strategies to use in the TL when they do not share linguistic, discourse, and sociolinguistic information with their interlocutors" (p. 118). Due to its importance, this strand of research has been under scrutiny since the 1970s because it has been acknowledged that students can benefit from the communication strategies. Whereas the early researchers like Faerch and Kasper (1983) and Selinker (1972) tried to conceptualize communication strategies, later researchers started to concentrate on factors that influence the application of such strategies. These strategies, among other things, gender (Sener & Blakir, 2013; Tarone, 1977), language proficiency (e.g., Chen, 1990; Dörnyei, 1995; Huang, 2006; Ting & Phan, 2008), motivation (e.g., Brown, 2007; Dörnyei, 1998), training (Dörnyei, 1995; Lam, 2010), and task type (Peacock & Ho, 2003; Mei & Nathalang, 2010). More recently, however, an attempt has been made to realize the reasons underlying students' preference for certain communication strategies as well as trying to identify these strategies not merely through surveys but also through observing their interaction in real communication tasks (Nakatani, 2005, 2010).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

English Language Teaching (ELT) is one of the popular programs offered in EMU at both graduate and undergraduate levels. However, studying the communication strategies that ELT major, graduate students utilize in order to communicate with each other has been rare due to the assumption that students majoring in English may be more proficient users of the English language and experience less communication difficulty and, as a result, deploy fewer communication strategies. However, the fact is that communication breakdowns are inevitable even regardless of the learners'

language proficiency since students are coming from different ethnic backgrounds (Pratt-Johnson, 2006; Singh & Renitha, 2010).

Despite increasing emphasis placed on communications skills, language learners feel frustrated to communicate their thoughts effectively, and even if they manage to do so, the thoughts and ideas that they express do not necessarily reflect what they mean. This consequently causes a communication breakdown. On the other hand, ESL/EFL instructors focus on utilizing communicative-oriented approaches to teaching and learning, and deploying authentic materials which must consequently result in fostering proficient language learners with good communication skills, most students majoring in English specifically those studying in the foreign educational contexts are seriously weak in their oral skills and fail to interact successfully even after years of English instruction at different language institutes or universities because most of them lack exposure to English language both inside and outside of their contexts and this is one of the key factors contributing to their communication problems (Zhou, 2014). Some scholars attribute this weakness, among other things, to lack of enough exposure to the target language, insufficient practice, and poor linguistic knowledge, and lack of communication skills (Huang, 2010). Nevertheless, it is argued that the problem is rooted in the fact that students are not equipped with CSs which help learners communicate effectively.

Communication strategies, as mentioned in the previous section, have mainly been addressed in relation to groups of students coming from the same country and culture, rather than in international contexts where students from diverse cultural backgrounds try to communicate with each other. The context might have an influence on the degree and type of communication strategy used. To the best of the

author's knowledge, a small body of research has focused on the extent to which these strategies can be culture-specific and different across nationalities.

Although previous studies have addressed communication strategies in relation to some influencing factors including age, gender, task type, etc. (e.g. Huang, 2013), the findings have yielded contradictory findings across different settings and this calls a need for conducting more case studies to increase our understanding of the requirements of a given context and to realize that what communication strategies these international students utilize which allows them to meet their communication needs in this multi-cultural context. Identifying these strategies is of high importance because it helps selecting appropriate strategies for appropriate purposes. It has also been observed that strategies used by proficient language learners or communicators is different from those used by low-proficiency students that is why many practitioners in the field of Second Language Learning and Second Language Teaching are preoccupied with identifying good language learners' strategies. It is therefore essential to identify more efficient strategies used by high-proficiency students; it is also helpful see what strategies are employed by the international students.

Furthermore, gender differences has always been a major concern but studies addressing this issue have yielded inconsistent findings and this calls a need for further investigation of this issue specifically in international, multi-cultural contexts.

Above all, the majority of the existing studies have tried to identify communication strategies that students utilize through self-reported questionnaires whereas

identifying these strategies specific communication tasks offers more in-depth insight into the strategies that students deploy during interaction with their peers.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Based on the identified problems and gaps as discussed in the previous section, this study aims to investigate the oral communication strategies (OCS) that international students coming from different ethnic backgrounds use when they interacting English As suggested by the statement of the problem, research in the area of the communication strategies utilized by students from different cultural backgrounds in international contexts have been quite rare. The author of this study assumes that there might be differences in the selection and use of these strategies by students coming from different countries. There is still sufficient understanding about the strategies that international students use to interact with each other in educational settings such as EMU where students at all levels of language proficiency experience oral communication breakdown. This study is designed to address these identified gaps in literature.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the identified problems discussed above, this study is designed to identify and compare the types of frequency and communication strategy use among international students with different ethnic backgrounds, as well as between male and female students. In simple words, this study seeks answer to the following questions:

1. What oral communication strategies do international students employ during communication in English?
2. Is there any difference in the use of oral communication strategies among the students from different ethnic backgrounds?

3. Is there any difference in the use of oral communication strategies between the male and female students?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The current study is of significance because as an under-investigated strand of research in international educational contexts, it investigates the oral communication strategies that students majoring in ELT utilize in order to communicate with each other. Studying this issue sheds more light on the challenges and difficulties that students studying in multi-cultural contexts experience. The communication strategies utilized by them during interaction also signify the extent to which they have developed communicative competence and are successful communicators since it is argued that being a proficient language learner does not necessarily mean being proficient in all language skills, it rather shows the ability of learners to use language effectively for communication purposes.

Identifying and studying oral communication strategies used by international students also provides useful insights for instructors and practitioners in this field to develop a better understanding of students' OCSs and assists them to communicate their ideas more successfully to other international students by introducing more efficient strategies which improves their oral performance (Nakatani, 2010), and make them more proficient communicators (Dörnyei, 1995).

Because of very limited literature available on this area, the findings of this study can be valuable because not only they confirm the findings obtained by the previous studies, but also may offer new results and insights into this important line of research. For example, so far, to the best of the author's knowledge, very few studies have identified and compared CSs utilized by students with different nationalities and this is a good addition to the present literature on this issue.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Communicative Competence: Knowledge of not only if something is formally possible in a language, but also whether it is feasible, appropriate, or done in a particular speech community. According to Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics, communicative competence includes:

a. grammatical competence (also formal competence), that is, knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and semantics of a language (also see competence)

b. sociolinguistic competence (also sociocultural competence), that is, knowledge of the relationship between language and its nonlinguistic context, knowing how to use and respond appropriately to different types of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, thanks, and invitations, knowing which address forms should be used with different persons one speaks to and in different situations, and so forth (see also appropriateness, pragmatics, role relationship)

c. discourse competence (sometimes considered part of sociolinguistic competence), that is, knowing how to begin and end conversations (see also speech events, cohesion, coherence)

d. strategic competence, that is, knowledge of communication strategies that can compensate for weakness in other areas (Richards, 1992, p. 361).

Communication Strategies: Although different definitions had been suggested to define communication strategies, the definition adhered in this study is that of Nakatani's (2010) maintaining that "CSs can be regarded as any attempts by learners

to overcome their difficulties and generate the TL to achieve communicative goals in actual interaction" (p. 118).

Oral Communication Strategies: This study follows Nakatani's (2010) explanation of oral communication strategies (OCSs) and differentiates it from communication strategies which is a more general term.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is first on the origin and conceptual frameworks related to communication strategies. Then, different taxonomies developed to identify these strategies are introduced and discussed. After that, empirical studies investigating the use of communication strategies and factors affecting their use are reviewed. Next section specifically concentrates communication strategy use among different nationality groups. Finally, this chapter ends with the gaps identified by reviewing the previous literature on this topic.

2.2 Communication Strategies

Unlike the traditional teaching/learning methods, the goal of current approaches is to enable language learners to develop ‘communicative competence’ so they can use language in order to communicate in real life. The notion of communicative competence was first introduced by Dell Hymes (1972). He told that developing ‘linguistic competence’ (Chomsky) alone does not help language learners to use language effectively thus, paying attention to this sociolinguistic requirement is also important and language users should be able to use a language which is appropriate to the given situation or social context. Later on, Canale and Swain (1980) explained communicative competence as having four dimensions: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Strategic competence is specifically related to communication strategies and is

defined as “verbal and nonverbal communication strategies ... to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence” (Canale& Swain, 1980, p. 30). In simple words, “communicative competence is what one knows; strategic competence is one’s ability to employ communication strategies (CSs) to handle breakdowns in communication” (Huang, 2010, p. 89).

In order to engage in a successful communication, language learners should acquire strategies (Shumin, 1997) which helps them manage a conversation and run it smoothly by knowing how to start, maintain, clear up, and end it as well as to cope with problems that may occur during the conversation (Scarcella& Oxford, 1992, Selinker, 1972). These strategies are called communication strategies, and according to Rabab’ah (20165) they contribute to the development of strategic competence. Here, different definitions of communication strategies from early times to date are reviewed for better understanding of these strategies. One of the earliest definitions was provided by Corder (1983) who defined CSs as “a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his [or her] meaning when faced with some difficulty” (p. 16). In more or less the same way, Stern (1983) explained these strategies as “techniques of coping with difficulties in communicating in an imperfectly known second language” (p. 411). Scholars like Bialystok (1990) and Farch and Kasper (1983) also consider communication strategies as techniques that speaker use to convey their intended meaning when they confront with communication breakdowns. But these scholars only focused on the learner's (or speaker) solutions and failed to consider the role of feedback given by the listener. On the other hand, Tarone (1980) defined communication strategies as “tools used in 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 only the responsibility of the speaker.” (p. 140). This definition points to the fact that in communication, the person functions both as a speaker and listener. He also argues that these strategies, in fact, compensate for the gaps existed between speaker's native language and the second language. Similarly, Nakatani (2005) also coined the term Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs) to refer to speaker’s cognitive process with a focus on both comprehension of what is told and production of what is going to be told. In addition, since different problems may impede communication, different strategies may be used to cope with them.

As discussed by Bialystok (1990), although there is no exact definition of communication strategies, it appears that all of them share three features of problematicity (strategies used when a problem impedes communication), consciousness (learners' awareness in the use of strategies), and intentionality (learner's choice of a certain communication strategy among the available options).

More recently, Hosseini, Sarfallah, and Bakhshipour (2015) argued that in the context of ESL/EFL, and particularly in English classrooms "students need to analyze, synthesize and assess information gathered as a result of interaction with their teacher and other peers. In other words, they have to think critically, and thereby, possess strategies which makes them raising important questions, collect related information, define the findings, and communicate effectively to solve a complex problem. Therefore, not only CSs are regarded as problem-solving strategies but also they are the best indicator of students' critical thinking according to these authors.

2.3 Classification of Communication Strategies

There have been several attempts during the recent decades to conceptualize and classify communication strategies (Dörnyei, 1995; Faerch & Kasper, 1984; Tarone, 1977). These attempts have resulted in the development of several classifications or taxonomies that are presented in what follows.

One of the earliest classifications of communication strategies is that of Tarone's (1977). It includes five major categories:

1. Avoidance (Topic avoidance, message abandonment),
2. Paraphrase (approximation, word coinage, and circumlocution),
3. Transfer (literal translation, language switch),
4. Appeal for assistance, and
5. Mime (such as non-verbal strategies, gestures, etc.).

It is argued that although Tarone's classification is clear and straightforward it is nothing but a list of some communication techniques without any explanation on how these strategies can contribute to or solve communication problems (Yang & Gai, 2010).

Faerch and Kasper (1984) had a problem-oriented approach to communication strategies and believed that these are the strategies that a given individual adopts in order to solve his/her communication problems. Their classification includes three possible strategies:

1. Reduction strategies (such as topic avoidance, message abandonment, and meaning replacement) that are used to reduce or change his/her communicative goal to escape problems.
2. Achievement strategies which include *cooperative strategies* (such as appeals), and *uncooperative strategies* (such as mime, restructuring, language switch,

borrowing, literal translation, exemplification, word coinage).

According to Faerch and Kasper (1984), whereas achievement strategies may provide opportunities for language learning, reduction strategies are less likely to result in language learning.

Dörnyei's (1995) classification of communication strategies had two groups: reduction strategies and achievement strategies. Stalling or time-gaining strategies helping speakers to gain time to keep the communication going in the face of a problem was also another proposed strategy by her.

Similarly, Bialystok (1990) categorized communication strategies in to two types:

1. L1-based strategies (such as linguistic switch, foreignizing, and transliteration),
2. L2-based strategies (such as substitution, description, and word coinage).

Bialystok (1990) believed that communication problems occur where there is a gap in the understanding of L2 and the speaker is not able to transfer what s/he knows in his L1 to L2. But, her classification does not include strategies like avoidance that are not necessarily related to the gaps in L2. Some other scholars also shared the same view. For example, Ellis (1994) argued that “CSs are procedural skills which learner used to overcome the inadequacies of their inter-language resources.” (p. 396).

Bialystock (1990) believes that different taxonomies developed up to that point were more or less the same and were mainly different in terms of terminology rather than

the nature of strategies. Later on, Dörnyei and Scott (1995a & b, 1997) combined various existing taxonomies in order to propose a comprehensive classification of communication strategies that includes components found in other taxonomies. To this end, they studied the communication strategies used by 44 Hungarian learners of English. Overall, more than 60 communication strategies including risk avoidance, and stalling as well as interactional strategies were identified. They first classified the communication strategies into a) direct, b) indirect, and c) interactional strategies, to see how these strategies result in shared understanding during communication. Second, these categories were connected to four types of communication problems: source deficit, processing time pressure, own performance problems and other performance problem (Levelt, 1999a). Spromberg (2011) elicited the communication strategies used by 25 high school English language learners as they communicated in small groups using Dörnyei and Scott's (1995) classification of communication strategies. The interactional coping devices comprised 47% of the total strategies identified which involved strategies like asking for clarification. Direct coping devices such as other-repair as well as indirect coping devices like code-switching were also applied by the students suggesting that small group communication provides the opportunity to negotiate meaning by the help of CSs.

Recently, however, Nakatani (2006) argued that most of these involve achievement and/or avoidance strategies which little attention directed to how these strategies are used by learners in real communication. To bridge this gap, he developed a questionnaire referred to as Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) to systematically examine learner's strategy use during communicative tasks. OCSI has two major parts:

1. Strategies for coping with speaking problems, and
2. Strategies for coping with listening problems.

The strategies for coping with speaking problems are divided across eight categories with 32 items. The eight categories of communication strategies dealing with speaking problems included: A) *social affective strategies* that are concerned with learners' affective aspects in social contexts, such as controlling anxiety; B) *fluency-oriented strategies* which address the fluency of communication, such as rhythm, intonation, etc.; C) *negotiating for meaning while speaking strategies* which refer to the interlocutors' attempts to negotiate with each other, such as repeating the sentence and providing examples; D) *accuracy-oriented strategies*, which address the accuracy of speech by paying attention, for example, to grammar; E) *message reduction and alteration strategies*, which are used to avoid a communication breakdown by reducing or simplifying an utterances; F) *non-verbal strategies while speaking*, which involve facial expressions, gestures, etc.; G) *message abandonment strategies*, which refers to quitting communication in the face of problems; and H) *attempts to think in English strategies*, which demands learners to think in L2.

Strategies for coping with listening problems are divided across seven categories with 26 items. These strategies include I) *negotiation for meaning while listening* used for exchanging behavior while listening; J) *fluency-maintaining* by paying attention to the flow of conversation; K) *scanning* strategies, which involves focusing on specific points of speech, such as verb; L) *getting the gist* by activating the background information.; M) *nonverbal strategies while listening* including use of nonverbal information, such as facial expression, to promote comprehension; N) *less active listener* which represent negative perceptions about using active listening strategies such as translation into L1; and O) *word-oriented* which is characterized by

heavy reliance on words to comprehend the speaker's intention.

Since Nakatani's OCSI appears as the most comprehensive and interactive taxonomy of communication strategies with emphasis on real communication in the EFL classroom context, it is adopted in the current research study.

Overall, these taxonomies indicate that communication problems are unavoidable parts of any communication and communication strategies are used as a means of solving them. They also indicate that there are diverse approaches to looking at them and these views have made progress over time leading to the development of more comprehensive taxonomies like that of Nakatani's (2006). Above all, studying communicative strategies is important to the extent that

Even a brief analysis of any spontaneous piece of L2 oral discourse reveals the importance of CSs in L2 users' verbal performance: These speakers (except those at a very advanced, near 'native' level) tend to spend a great deal of time and effort struggling to make up for their L2 deficiencies.(Dörnyei& Scott, 1997, p. 174).

2.4 Factors Affecting the Use of Oral Communication Strategies

Several studies in the field of ELT have addressed the factors that may affect the use of communication strategies among language learners. These factors, among the other things include strategy training, task type, frequency of communication in L2, gender, language proficiency, discipline, and motivation (Dörnyei, 1995; Huang, 2006; Kendall, Jarvie, Lin, & Purcell, 2005; Mei & Nathalang, 2010; Nakatani, 2005, 2006, 2010; Peacock & Ho, 2003; Spromberg, 2011). Some of the main studies are reviewed in what follows.

2.4.1 Strategy Training

It appears that communication strategy training and instruction can enhance learners' use of more effective communication strategies but only a few number of studies have addressed this issue.

Dörnyei (1995) studied the effect of training three types of communication strategies: topic avoidance and replacement, circumlocution, and using fillers and hesitation on both the quality and quantity of the learners' strategy use who were high school EFL students. The results showed that the learners' speech performance improved significantly in the strategy training group.

Scullen and Jourdain (2000) implemented the explicit teaching of oral circumlocution to French major undergraduate learners. The results of their study showed significant gains in the experimental group receiving strategy training in the post-test. The experimental study by Lam (2010) also investigated oral communication strategy training to address both the learning process (strategy use) and the learning product (task performance). The results of their study indicated that strategy training has the potential to help only low-proficient learners to reach higher states of proficiency both in the learning process and the learning product as the result of the post-test indicated that. However, the researchers suggested that instead of encouraging low-proficient learners to use strategies utilized by high-proficient ones, it is preferable for them to employ their own strategies because strategies used by high-proficiency groups usually requires higher linguistic competence.

Kendall et al. (2005) introduced strategies of interlanguage communication to 25 non- proficient English learners in Taiwan in order to help them become more

proficient in English as a second language. The data included the recorded speech of the learners during a discussion activity. The authors assumed that the instruction of such strategies is important because they allow learners to be able to communicate effectively even when their linguistic proficiency is still inadequate. In doing so, this study concentrated on collecting the twenty five English non-major freshmen students' speeches created through applying communication strategies. The results showed that the learners could transfer their intended message more successfully.

Nakatani (2005) studied patterns of Oral Communication Strategy Use (OCSU), and addressed the extent to which these strategies can be taught explicitly, and also can result in progress in oral communication competency. The findings showed that the learners in the strategy training group who received metacognitive training with focus on OCSU training over a twelve-week period, experienced significant improvements compared to the control group suggesting that increased awareness about OCSs or the employment of a certain OCS such as fluency-maintaining can contribute to enhancing learners' communicative competence. Based on this study, Nakatani (2006) developed the Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) as a reliable and valid tool for identifying and assessing the OCSs used by language learners.

More recently, Saeidi and Farshchi (2015) examined oral communication strategies employed by 60 Iranian English major junior high students during oral production in a picture-based story telling task after eight weeks of strategy instruction in a content-based course. The findings of their study showed that communication strategies instruction had a positive effect on the students' oral production regarding the quantity of speech, including the total number of words and phrases.

In addition, Rabab'ah (2016) investigated the influence of communication strategy instruction on strategic competence and communicative ability of eighty EFL learners. The study had an experimental pretest-posttest design in which learners in the test group received CS training while the normal communicative course was presented to the students in the control group. According to the result of the study, the CS group scored higher both in the posttest and the IELTS speaking test scores compared to the control group.

In total, the findings of the studies suggest the positive influence of strategy instruction on learners' development of strategic competence and improvement in adopting more effective communication strategies.

2.4.2 Proficiency

Previous research has shown that there is a relationship between proficiency level and communication strategies that learners use (Huang, 2006; Moattarian&Tahririan, 2013; Nakatani, 2010; Ting &Phan, 2008).

Huang (2006) utilized Nakatani's OCSI (2006) to identify the communication approaches used by 99 Taiwanese sophomore students in authentic interactions, and more specifically to see the effect of factors such as proficiency, self-perceived oral proficiency, the frequency of communicating in English outside the classroom, gender, and motivation to speak English on the use of OCSs. According to the results, the application of 'message reduction' and 'alternation strategies' was the highest as opposed to 'message abandonment strategies' with the least application. Motivation in speaking English and self-perceived oral proficiency had a significant correlation with the use of oral communication strategies, but no correlation was found with gender and English proficiency. Finally, the frequency of communicating in English

outside the classroom and motivation to speaking English were strong predictors of the use of OCSs. The findings suggested that functional practice and intrinsic motivation were key factors in the improvement of oral competence. Similarly, Nakatani's (2010) study of the role of communication strategy training on English proficiency development of Japanese students confirmed that strategies indicated that this form of training helped learners to maintain discourse and negotiate meaning than avoid it and this subsequently improved their communicative competence.

Ting and Phan (2008) examination of communication strategies used by Malaysian students showed that both low-proficiency and high-proficiency groups used more or less the same frequency of strategies; however, the difference between the two proficiency groups was significant in terms of the type of strategy used with less proficient speakers having a tendency to use first language-based (L1) strategies like switching but more proficient speakers having a tendency to employ tonicity to indicate prominence of information in order to improve negotiation of meaning.

Hua, Nor and Jaradat (2012) examined how and when Chinese and Arabic students in Malaysia use oral communication strategies in group discussion tasks. A distinction was also made between high and low proficient speakers in the use of strategies. Data obtained from audio recordings of group discussions and self-report questionnaires were used to detect the CSs utilized. These international students used ten types of communication strategies specified by Faerch and Kasper (1983), Tarone (1980), and Willems (1987). Whereas code switching was the most commonly used strategy, word coinage was the least used one. The choice of communication strategy was also found to be affected by the proficiency level; the high-proficient group reported code switching, topic avoidance and appeal for assistance but the low-

proficient speakers reported code switching, literal translation and message abandonment as the most common strategies they use. Similarly, Wahyuni's (2013) study of L2 speaking strategies used by Indonesian EFL students indicated that they principally favored metacognitive strategies, and the difference between L2 proficiency and students' overall strategy use was significant.

In a similar vein, Nakatani, Makki, and Bradly (2012) studied learners' textbooks at a private language institute in Shiraz, Iran, to identify the communication strategies that were deployed by learners with different proficiency level in open-ended conversation tasks. According to the results, no significant difference was seen among the three groups concerning the frequency of the CSs used. But the difference was more evident in the type of strategies applied by each group. In other words, whereas elementary-level students normally used strategies hindering the flow of their communication, advanced students typically applied strategies which sustained the flow of interaction.

More recently, Alawi (2006) explored the employment of CSs by EFL students in Oman using a qualitative approach which collected data through interview and tasks than questionnaires. The results of the study showed that the proficiency level of the students affected their selection of communication strategies. Forinstance, in this study, low proficiency students used L1 based strategies whereas high proficiency students used circumlocution or approximation.

More recently, Mirzaei and Heidari (2012) administered a study to identify CSs utilized by 50 Iranian fluent and non-fluent EFL students using OCSI. Findings of their study showed that *social-affective, negotiating for meaning while speaking* and

fluency-oriented strategies as well as *scanning* and *getting the gist* were the speaking and listening strategies considerably used by the more fluent students whereas strategies utilized by non-fluent students included word-oriented strategies. Similarly, Moattarian and Tahririan (2013) examined 60 Iranian EFL learners' application of CSs in oral and written performances that were placed in high-proficiency and low-proficiency groups. Dornyei's (1995) taxonomy of CSs was utilized to identify the CSs employed by low- and high-proficiency learners. Overall, students used more strategies in oral than written performance suggesting the significant role of context of communication strategies use. The most problematic areas for the students were lexical gaps, problems in discourse management, and uncertainty in conveying the message. Moreover, a significant negative relationship was observed between the use of CSs and level of proficiency with low-proficiency learners using fewer communication strategies.

2.4.3 Task Type and Discipline

A few numbers of studies have investigated the influence of task type as well as the discipline on the choice and use of OCSs.

Peacock and Ho (2003) considered communication strategies as a portion of learning strategies and studied the application of learning strategies by 1006 university students in the ESP course across eight disciplines. The findings of their study indicated that humanities students used a larger amount of strategies than science and engineering students did. They also mentioned the weakness of their study that only a limited number of students ($N = 3$) from each discipline participated in the in-depth interview. Mochizuki's (1999) study also showed that compared to science major students, English major students employed a higher amount of compensation, social, and metacognitive strategies.

Mei and Nathalang (2010) investigated the CSs used by Chinese undergraduates with either a high or low English proficiency level in two tasks: concept identification task and role play task in two different disciplines. A significant difference was found in use of strategies between the two tasks in three strategy groups, that is, avoidance, inter-language-based and inter-language negotiation strategies. Communication techniques employed in the first task were majorly inter-language-based including paraphrasing, restructuring and generalization, and avoidance strategies. Conversely, strategies used in the second task were more engaging and promoted more cooperation to attain the communicative goals. Compared to the low-proficient learners, the high-proficient learners utilized more inter-language-based CSs strategies than avoidance strategies. As far as discipline was concerned, the difference between Science and Arts participants was significant in the use of clarification with Science students tended to use more clarification requests in the role-play task to make communication running more smoothly.

In the context of Iran, Kaivanpanah, Yamouty and Karami (2012) studied the frequency of communication strategies (CSs) and their relationship with task types (as well as with proficiency and gender). Three tasks which were adopted from previous literature were picture description, telling a joke, and telling a story. The findings showed that task type had a significant influence on the use of some strategies including circumlocution, appeal for help, and message abandonment.

However, there are also studies that have concluded that the nature of the task does not necessarily influence the communication strategies. For example, Smith (2003) observed that there was no significant difference in the amount and nature of communication strategy use in two types of task, that is, jigsaw and decision-making.

In general, these studies suggest that discipline or field of study and task type has a potential impact on the use of learning and communication strategies but since a few numbers of studies have addressed this issue overgeneralization of findings cannot be made.

2.4.3 Gender

There is some evidence indicating that communication strategy use may also be influenced by the gender of learners. Yaman, Irging, and Kavasoglu (2013) study of speaking and listening strategies or CSs employed by 291 Turkish EFL showed that negotiation for meaning, compensatory, and getting the gist strategies in communication were the most commonly-used communication strategies with female students applying more communication strategies than males did at the advanced level. Moreover, both genders students employed getting the gist strategies more than compensation strategies. Sener and Blakir's (2013) study of communication strategies employed by 75 freshman English major students showed that approximation was the most frequently used strategy as opposed to foreignizing as the least used strategy. Besides, female's non-linguistic devices are much more than their male counterparts. Some other studies also had similar results (e.g., [Lai, 2010](#); Macaro, 2006).

The context of communication also appears a determining factor affecting the rate of communication by different genders. For example, Baker and MacIntyre (2000) found that girls preferred in-class communication but boys were more willing to communicate in L2 outside of class.

2.5 Communication Strategy Use Among Different Nationality Groups

As the review of the above studies suggests and as will be discussed in this section,

students use a variety of strategies communication strategies. According to these studies, the use of these strategies are affected by factors such as training, proficiency level, task type, etc. however, what is neglected in most of these studies is the effect that culture or nationality might have on the use of these strategies. So, use of CSs by the students may be culture-specific and varies depending on the region or country they come from because educational systems in any country may practice a certain ideology or encourage specific learning strategies. To elaborate, in the context of Iran, as well as in some countries in the Middle East where grammar translation method is still popular, students may still heavily rely on L1 strategies when communicating in L2. But very few studies have addressed the CSs used by students with different nationalities that is why there is scarcity of literature on this topic.

Ugla, Adnan, and Abidin (2012) conducted a study to identify CSs used by 50 Iraqi university students majoring in EFL using Dornyei and Scott's taxonomy of CSs (1995). Code-switching, message replacement and self-repair (direct strategies), use of fillers, self-repetition and feigning understanding (indirect strategies), and direct appeal for help (interactional strategies) were the most frequent strategies reported by the Iraqi students. In this regard, Ugla, Adnan and Abidin (2013) tried to identify the communication strategies used by 50 Malaysian university ESL students using the same taxonomy. Retrieval and use of all-purpose words (direct strategies), use of fillers (indirect strategies), and response: repair and asking for clarification (interactional strategies) were the most common strategies reported by the Malaysian students. As can be seen, although the samples used in both studies were homogeneous in terms of number, field of study (EFL/ESL) and proficiency, the results indicated that students from the two nationalities utilized quite types of different types of communication strategies. (Levine, Reves, & Leaver, 1996).

In general, the results of the few studies available suggest that there are some differences in the use of CSs utilized by students coming from different cultural backgrounds and diversity in multicultural contexts may bring about some challenges (Singh & Rampersad, 2010), thus identifying these differences are of high importance in solving communication failures among international students.

2.6 Summary of Literature Review

The review of studies reviewed in this section showed that researchers hold different outlooks concerning CSs and this has led to the development of different taxonomies but in total the taxonomies show an evolutionary trend from mere classification of strategies (Tarone, 1997) to those that also consider how these strategies are used by the learners (Nakatani, 2006). Due to its comprehensiveness, most recent studies have adopted Nakatani's inventory to study OCSU among different groups of learners.

In total, the review of previous studies confirmed that language learners perform a series of mental considerations and planning before they utilize a certain strategy to overcome collapses occurring during communication (Færch & Kasper, 1983) mainly as a result of their limited language proficiency in L2. While using communication strategies, several factors need to be considered, for example, the situation, the topic of conversation, the age and gender of the participants, etc. Although several studies have addressed different factors influencing the use of oral communication strategy use, some aspects and have still been left uninvestigated. Above all, as the review of literature demonstrates that these studies have been administered across different contexts and have yielded different and sometimes even contradictory results, so the findings are tentative and still open to question. This drawback avoids the generalizability of their findings to other educational contexts and this calls a need

for further investigation of this issue. Most of the studies reviewed have addressed communication strategies utilized by a certain group of students, for example Iranian students (Moattarian&Tahririan, 2013), Taiwanese students (Kendall et al., 2005), Chinese students (Mei &Nathalang, 2010) as well as the other contexts; however, investigation of the oral communication strategies in international multi-lingual contexts where students come from different cultural backgrounds has been left uninvestigated despite its importance since in such multi-cultural contexts student may experience more communication problems.

It is also suggested that students with different language and cultural backgrounds may use different communication strategies but there is not still sufficient evidence for this claim. Moreover, previous studies have shown different results concerning the relationship between gender and CSs.

Another concern is assessing communication strategies in highly controlled communicative tasks in some studies (e.g., Mei &Nathalang, 2010) which might have stimulated the utilization of specific CSs. That is why in studying these strategies should not be limited to self-assessment questionnaires or controlled tasks and other methods such as interviewing them and observing students' performance in order to elicit the strategies they employ when communicating with their international counterparts are also preferable.

On the basis of the above discussion, the aim of the present study, hence, is to investigate the oral communication strategies (OCS) used by students with different ethnic backgrounds while communicating in English. Gender differences are also taken into account.

Chapter 3

METHODS

This chapter first introduces the design of the study. Section two describes the participants of the study and their demographic information and characteristics. Section three explains the instruments adopted in this study to collect data. Sections four and five explain the data collection and data analysis procedures, respectively. Section seven deals with reliability of the study.

Eastern Mediterranean University is the largest academic site in Northern Cyprus with over 18,000 students the majority of whom are international students from across the world but mainly from the Middle East countries which has made the university a highly multi-cultural and multilingual context. Most of these students use the English language in order to interact with each other and since they are not usually very proficient speakers of English language, they may experience communication breakdowns. Hence, they utilize a variety of strategies to facilitate interaction among each other and the present study is designed to identify the communication strategies that international students employ to cope with the demands of situations with is the multi-cultural context of EMU.

3.1 Design

This study adopted a mixed-method approach to address the questions under investigation. The importance of mixed-method approaches have been acknowledged by many scholars (Brown & Rodgers, 2002; Riazi&Candlin, 2014). In this study, on the one hand the use of a self-reported questionnaire provided quantitative data that

could be measured statistically. On the other hand, qualitative data were triangulated with the quantitative data through observing and identifying the oral communication strategies the participants used in a real-like task as well as an interview with the same three volunteer participants in order to yield more reliable results.

3.2 Participants

The participants of this study were 47 postgraduate students majoring in English Language Teaching registered in the 2015-2016 academic year, the second semester, in the Eastern Mediterranean University. Of all the participants, 32 volunteered to participate in the study; hence, the sampling procedure was availability or convenience sampling. The mean age of the participants was 27.86. The majority of the participants were master's students with 84.4% (N = 27) whereas only 15.6% (N = 5) were PhD candidates. Proportion of genders were definitely equal with 50% of the students being male (N = 16), and 50% being female (N = 16). Table 3.2.1 shows the proportion of the participants across different nationalities.

Nationality	Frequency	Percent
Turkish	8	25.0
Iranian	8	25.0
Iraqi	4	12.5
African	4	12.5
Others	8	25.0

Table 3.2.1: distribution of the participants across different nationalities

The distribution of the participants across different nationalities led to the identification of five nationality groups including Turkish (N = 8), Iranian (N = 8), Iraqi (N =4), African (N = 4), and others (N = 8). It is worth mentioning that all Iraqi students were from Kurdish ethnic background, and students from nationalities whose numbers did not exceed two were group under a single category referred to as others. These students were all Asian, and from Palestine, Syria, and Kazakhstan countries.

As international students, all the participants have provided proof of English language proficiency test (IELTS or TOEFL), or have attended English deficiency courses prior to the beginning of the study as one of the main requirements of admission to the ELT graduate program.

3.3 Instruments

Different instruments were used in this study in order to collect data which are explained in what follows:

3.3.1 Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI)

The original version of the inventory developed by Nakatani (2006) was used in this study as the primary source of data collection to identify and assess the participants'oral communication strategy use (Appendix A). Since its development, this inventory has been used extensively to explore communication strategy use

invarious countries (e.g., Brown, 2013; Teng, 2011) because it has high reliability confirmed by Cronbach's alpha (speaking part: .86; listening part: .85). The questionnaire had two major parts. The first part included questions that elicited the participants' characteristics including their age, gender, level of education, and nationality. This second or the main part of the inventory included the questionnaire items divided into two major parts: a) strategies for coping with speaking problems across eight categories including social affective (items 1-6), fluency-oriented (items 7-12), negotiation for meaning while speaking (items 13-16), accuracy-oriented (items 17-21), message reduction and alternation (items 22-23), nonverbal strategies while speaking (items 24-26), message abandonment (items 27-30), and attempt to think in English (items 31-32), and b) strategies for coping with listening problems consists of specific strategies across seven categories including negotiation for meaning while listening (items 1-5), fluency-maintaining (items 6-10), scanning (items 11-14), getting the gist (items 15-18), nonverbal strategies while listening (items 19-20), less active listener (items 21-22), and word-oriented strategies (items 23-26). In the current study, both speaking and listening strategies used in dealing with speaking and listening problems were addressed. The questionnaire items scored on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from never to always use (1 = never, 2 = hardly, 3 = sometimes, 4 = usually, 5 = always).

3.3.2 Oral Communication Task

An Oral Communication Task similar to that of Nakatani's (2005) was selected and administered to students who voluntarily accepted to perform it (Appendix B) which was a "simulated authentic conversation" (p. 80) between two interlocutors. But the topic (e.g., booking a room in a hotel) and the role (e.g., hotel clerk) were modified a

bit to become more compatible with the international EFL students schemata. In this oral communication task which was based on a scenario, the interaction was between the interviewer (the researcher) and the volunteering participants, and, following Nakatani's procedure, the interviewee faces with unexpected questions (communication breakdowns) to which s/he should find a solution. Since this task and this form of assessment was based on observation, the researcher's field notes produced during the observation also formed another source of data to be used as a supplementary data for analysis.

3.3.3 The Assessment Scale

The assessment scale was developed by Nakatani (2002) in order to assess the oral communication task (Appendix C). It is an original scale developed by Nakatani (2002) which is used to score the results obtained from the oral communication task. Using this scale, the performance of the students was scored across seven levels from communicating effectively to communicating extremely restrictedly in four aspects of communication including a) the effectiveness of communication, b) fluency, c) the quality of interaction with interlocutors, and d) dialogue maintenance. The assessment was carried out by the researcher.

3.3.4 Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview was designed by the researcher to provide more in-depth data to triangulate the results obtained from the questionnaire. The interview questions are presented in Appendix D.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

This study was administered during the 2015-2016 academic year, the second semester. After mid-term exam, usually held by the 8th week of each semester, the researcher attended MA and Master's classes in ELT with the permission of the professors of these cases and administered the questionnaire. All the students were briefed about the purpose of the study and were asked to participate in this study on a voluntarily basis. During the administration, the students could ask the researcher about ambiguous points they did not fully understand. A consent letter was attached to the questionnaire and those who accepted to participate were required to read and sign the consent letter as well. The students completed the questionnaire within 15-20 minutes. At the end of the administration, a total of 32 questionnaires were collected.

Two weeks left to the end of the semester, the oral communication task was administered. To illustrate, the four volunteer participants who were two master's and two PhD candidates accepted to participate both in this task and the interview. Whereas one master's and one PhD student was Iranian, the other master's and PhD students were of the Turkish and Iraqi origin. The two PhD candidates and the two master's students formed two pairs and were instructed how to take roles and do the oral communication task. All the interactions between the pairs were audio-recorded for future analysis. The researcher observed their performance and filled out the assessment scale accordingly. The interaction between each pair took around 20 minutes.

Right after the oral communication task, an interview was administered to the four volunteer participants individually. All the interaction between the interviewer (the researcher) and the interviewees was audio-recorded for future retrieval and analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedure

In this study several statistical data analyses were performed using SPSS software (version 19.0) in order to analyze different sources of data obtained through both qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures.

To address the first research question, that is, the type and degree of OCSs used by the international students, descriptive statistics was performed and Mean and SD of oral communication speaking and listening strategies were computed. An analysis was also carried out with respect to two broad categories of speaking and listening strategies.

To address the second research question, that is, to identify any differences that might exist among students with different nationalities in their preferred types of oral communication strategy, some statistical analyses were carried out. First, the mean and SD of the oral communication strategies were computed using descriptive statistics in each nationality group. Second, ANOVA test was performed to compare the results across different nationality groups with respect to 15 speaking and listening categories. The significance level was set at 0.05.

To address the third research question which aimed to identify possible differences existed between male and female students regarding OCSs, a total of 15 independent sample t-tests, eight for the speaking strategies and seven for listening strategies categories, were performed to understand whether the mean differences between the two genders are significant.

The qualitative task included an oral communication task which was based on the researcher's observation and scoring the participants according an assessment scale. For the analysis, it was sufficient for the researcher to score the participants' performance on a rating scale from to 7.

Finally, to analyze the data obtained through the interview, all the audio-recorded interaction between the researcher and the four participants were transcribed and the relevant excerpt were selected to be used for discussion of findings and to confirm the results that were obtained quantitatively.

3.6 Reliability and Validity of the OCSs Questionnaire

In order to maintain reliability in both collecting and analyzing the data, the Cronbach's alpha of the students' responses to OCSI questionnaire was computed which was .85 for the speaking part and .84 for the listening part. These values were found to be within an acceptable range and thus the reliability or consistency of the data was confirmed. Moreover, all statistical analyses were performed by an expert in statistics to ensure accuracy of the analysis. Finally, the oral communication task adopted from Nakatani (2005) was modified by an educational researcher in ELT to fit the current situation of the study. Expert judgment was obtained for the OCSI questionnaire. One statistical, educational, and psychological and an expert in reached to the consensus about the validity of the questionnaire

Chapter 4

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the analysis carried out in order to provide answer to the three research questions. The first section presents the result of the analysis indicating the oral communication strategies employed by the participants of the study in total. The second section specifically shows the result of the analysis pertaining to the OCSs reported by students with different nationalities in order to identify the differences that might exist between different ethnicities in terms of communication strategy use. The third section makes a comparison in the use of OCSs between male and female's students. The fourth section represents the results of the qualitative analysis of an oral communication ask performed in this study. Finally, the fifth section discusses the results by reflecting on the results of the other studies and discussions put forward in the literature review section.

4.1 Oral Communication Strategies Used by the International Students

This section provides answer to the first research question:

- 1. What oral communication strategies do international students employ during communication in English?*

First of all, to depict a more general picture of the strategies, the distribution of OCSs with respect to two broad speaking and listening strategies is represented in Table 4.1.1.

Table 4.1.1 distribution of OCSs across two broad listening and speaking categories

	N	percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speaking strategies	256	53.3%	3.41	.790
Listening strategies	224	46.7%	3.50	.764

As can be seen, the students utilized more speaking than listening strategies (256 vs. 224) with speaking and listening strategies being 53.3% and 46.7%, respectively. It is noteworthy that the highest mean that can be obtained is 5 so, the closer the means are to 5, the higher agreement with given strategies they suggest. The speaking strategies have a lower mean (3.41) compared to the listening strategies (3.50). Both listening and speaking strategies have SD below 1 which shows the scores are normally distributed around the mean and the students' responses are in agreement with each other.

Table 4.1.2 reports the results of descriptive statistics performed to identify the type and mean of OCSs that the international students use across the eight categories of speaking and the seven categories of listening parts.

As can be seen in Table 4.1.2, *social affective strategy* is the most highly-reported speaking strategy (M = 3.8). This strategy also had the lowest standard deviation (SD = .432) meaning that the students' responses more agreed with each other compared to the other strategies. *Negotiation for meaning while speaking* (M = 3.75, SD = .615) and *message reduction and alternation* (M = 3.67, SD = .720) speaking strategies reported by the international students.

OCSI Strategies	Mean	SD
<i>Speaking strategies</i>		
(A) Social Affective	3.80	.432

Table 4.1.2 Percentage of OCSs employed by the international students		
		.660
(C) Negotiation for Meaning while Speaking	3.75	.615
(D) Accuracy-Oriented	3.45	.673
(E) Message Reduction and Alternation	3.67	.789
(F) Nonverbal Strategies while Speaking	3.56	.720
(G) Message Abandonment	2.71	.833
(H) Attempt to Think in English	3.00	.889
<i>Listening strategies</i>		
(I) Negotiating for Meaning while Listening	3.69	.576
(J) Fluency Maintaining	3.64	.524
(K) Scanning	3.63	.588
(L) Getting the Gist	3.66	.584
(M) Nonverbal Strategies while Listening	3.96	.659
(N) Less Active Listener	2.64	.969
(O) Word-Oriented	3.32	.638

Although to a lesser degree, *message reduction and alteration* ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .789$), *accuracy-oriented* ($M = 3.45$, $SD = .673$) *fluency-oriented* ($M = .660$) are the next frequent strategies reported by the students.

On the other hand, *message abandonment* ($M = 2.71$) and attempt to think in English ($M = 3.00$) are the least reported speaking strategy by these students. However, these two strategies has the highest standard deviation of all (.833 & .889, respectively) meaning that the students' responses are more varied. It is noteworthy that the SD of all strategies is below 1 which suggests a normal distribution and agreement of the responses.

As far as the listening strategies are concerned, *nonverbal strategies while listening* is the most highly-reported speaking strategy (M = 3.96, SD = .659). This strategy had the highest rank of all concerning both speaking and listening strategies. *Negotiation for meaning while listening* (M = 3.69, SD = .576) and *getting the gist* (M = 3.66, SD = .584) are the second and third highly reported listening strategies by the international students. Although to a slightly lesser degree, *fluency-maintaining* (M = 3.64, SD = .524), *scanning* (M = 3.63, SD = .588), and *word-oriented* (M = 3.32, SD = .638) are the next frequent strategies reported by them.

On the other hand, *less active listener* (M = 2.64) is the least reported listening strategy reported by these students. This strategy has the highest standard deviation of all (.969) suggesting the higher variation and difference in the students responses to this strategy.

4.2 Oral Communication Strategies Used by the International Students across Nationality Groups

This section provides answer to the second research question:

2. *Is there any difference in the use of oral communication strategies among students with different ethnic backgrounds?*

In order to see the difference in the use of OCSs among students with different nationalities, first the Mean and SD of different listening and speaking strategies was computed as it is shown in Table 4.2.1.

Table 4.2.1 Descriptive statistics for OCSs reported by the students across different nationalities

	N	Mean	SD

Turkish	8	3.51	.930
Iranian	8	3.53	.881
Others	8	3.51	1.06
Iraqi	4	3.20	.880
African	4	3.59	.789
Total	32	3.46	.908

According to Table 4.2.1, African students reported the highest mean (3.59) in the use of OCSs compared to the other nationalities (SD = .789). In the second place, Iranian students had the highest mean (3.53) in the use of OCSs (SD = .881). Turkish as well as students in the others group had similar means (3.51); however, the standard deviation of others was higher than that of the Turkish students (1.06 vs. .930). Iraqi students had the lowest mean in the use of OCSs (3.20, SD = .880).

To obtain more detailed results, descriptive statistics was also performed to compute mean and SD of the 15 categories of listening and speaking oral communication strategies across the five different nationalities identified in this study. The result of these analyses is represented in Table 4.2.2.

According to Table 4.2.2, as far as the speaking strategies are concerned, some of the most frequent strategies reported are the same across different nationalities. *Social-affective strategy* is the most frequently reported strategy by Turkish (M = 3.88, SD = .443) and Iraqi students (M = 3.87, SD = .517), and the second most frequently reported strategy by Iranian (3.91, SD = .267), African (M = 3.87, SD = .478), as well as students in others category with the (M = 3.87, SD = .517). *Negotiating for*

meaning while speaking was the most frequent speaking strategy reported by Iranian and Other students with similar means (3.96) but different standard deviations (.311 & .541, respectively). It was a frequent strategy by Turkish students as well (M = 3.75, SD = .894) but, the same strategy had a low mean in Iraqi students' group (M = 2.79, SD = .629).

Table 4.2.2 Descriptive statistics for the use of categories of OCSs across different nationalities

Nationality		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Turkish	N	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	Mean	3.88	3.55	3.75	3.56	3.41	3.83	2.70	2.33	3.83	3.70	3.41	3.58	4.00	2.00	3.04
	Std. D	.443	.646	.894	.674	.801	.408	.886	1.08	.366	.244	.605	.562	.447	1.04	.696
Iranian	N	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	Mean	3.91	3.70	3.96	3.55	3.87	3.66	2.59	3.18	3.45	3.50	3.65	3.59	4.43	2.31	3.28
	Std. D	.267	.554	.311	.798	.640	.642	.823	.651	.381	.370	.376	.399	.623	.752	.410
Iraqi	N	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	Mean	3.87	3.50	2.79	3.37	3.00	3.75	3.00	2.68	2.75	3.55	3.35	3.00	4.00	3.50	3.50
	Std. D	.517	.272	.629	.777	.848	1.04	.720	.625	1.04	.597	.700	.000	.408	1.22	.272
African	N	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	Mean	3.87	3.29	3.62	3.50	4.00	3.50	3.12	3.25	3.75	3.65	3.93	3.81	3.87	3.00	3.62
	Std. D	.478	.284	.250	.115	.707	.793	.924	.288	.754	.191	.515	.718	.478	1.08	.250
Others	N	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	Mean	3.87	3.39	3.96	3.25	3.62	3.66	2.75	3.37	3.75	3.65	3.68	3.46	3.68	2.68	3.46
	Std. D	.517	.739	.541	.583	.916	.975	1.05	.790	.690	.656	.608	.817	.372	.842	.632

A: social affective, B: fluency-oriented, C: negotiation for meaning while speaking, D: accuracy-oriented strategies, E: message reduction and alteration strategies, F: nonverbal strategies while speaking, G: message abandonment strategies, H: attempt to think in English strategies, I: negotiation for meaning while listening, J: fluency-maintaining, K: scanning strategies, L: getting the gist strategies, M: nonverbal strategies while listening, N: less active listener strategies, O: word-oriented strategies

Nonverbal strategies while speaking was the second most common strategy by Turkish (M = 3.83, SD = .408) and Iraqi students (M = 3.75, SD = .04). Iranians and Others also reported the same rate of this strategy (M = 3.66) though with different standard deviations (.642 vs. .975, respectively). The mean of this strategy by the Africans was 3.50 (SD = .793). However, African students reported *message reduction and alteration strategies* (M = 4.00, SD = .707) as the most frequent strategy they use while it was not a common strategy reported specially by Iraqi (M = 3.00, SD = .848) and Turkish (M = 3.41, SD = .848) students.

The rest of the strategies had been reported as less frequent by the participants. *Fluency-oriented* strategies were more common among the Iranian (M = 3.70, SD = .554) and Turkish (M = 3.55, SD = .646) students. Likewise, *accuracy-oriented* strategies were more common among the Iranian (M = 3.55, SD = .798) and Turkish (M = 3.56, SD = .674) students.

The lowest means across all the nationality groups belonged to *Message abandonment strategies* and *attempt to think in English strategies*. More specifically, *message abandonment strategies* was the least reported by Iranians (2.59, SD = .823) and the most by Africans (M = 3.12, SD = .924). *Attempt to think in English strategies* as the second least frequently reported strategy, was the least common by the Turkish students (M = 2.33, SD = 1.08) and the most common among Others (M = 3.37, SD = .790).

Regarding the listening strategies, *nonverbal strategies while listening* was reported by Iranian (M = 4.43, SD = .623), Turkish (M = 4.00, SD = .447), and Iraqi (M = 4.00, SD = .408) students as the most frequently used listening strategy. It was also

the second most frequently reported strategy by the Other students ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .372$) and the third most frequently reported listening strategy by the African students ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .478$).

Negotiation for meaning while listening was also a frequent listening strategy reported by the others students ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .690$) and the second most frequent strategy by the Turkish students ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .366$) but it was the least frequent strategy reported by the Iraqi students ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.04$).

Fluency-maintaining and *scanning* strategies were the next frequently used strategies reported by the students. *Fluency-maintaining strategies* were reported as common by Turkish ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .366$), African and Others ($M = 3.65$, $SD = .191$ & $.656$), Iraqi ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .597$), and Iranian ($M = 3.5$, $SD = .370$) students, respectively. *Scanning strategies*, on the other hand, was the first highly reported strategy by Africans ($M = 3.93$, $SD = .515$) followed by others ($M = .368$, $SD = .608$) and Iranians ($M = 3.65$, $SD = .376$). *Getting the gist strategies* was the second highly reported strategy by the African students ($M = 3.8$, $SD = .718$), followed by the Iranian ($M = 3.59$, $SD = .399$), and Turkish ($M = 3.58$, $SD = .562$) students.

Word-oriented strategies and *less active listener strategies* and were the least reported strategy across all nationality groups. Concerning *word-oriented strategies*, the highest mean (3.62 , $SD = .250$) was reported by the African students and the lowest mean (3.04 , $SD = .696$) was reported by the Turkish students. Concerning *less active listener strategies*, the highest mean (3.50 , $SD = 1.22$) was reported by the Iraqi students and the lowest mean (2.00 , $SD = 1.04$) was reported by the Turkish students.

To assess whether students coming from different ethnic backgrounds and nationalities differ with each other in terms of OCS and whether the differences are significant, the ANOVA test was run. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.2.3.

Table 4.2.3 ANOVA test for comparing OCSs reported across different nationalities

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<i>Speaking strategies</i>						
Social Affective	Between Groups	.576	4	.144	.745	.570
	Within Groups	5.22	27	.194		
	Total	5.80	31			
Fluency-Oriented	Between Groups	2.28	4	.570	1.37	.271
	Within Groups	11.24	27	.416		
	Total	13.52	31			
Negotiation for Meaning while Speaking	Between Groups	1.672	4	.418	1.12	.368
	Within Groups	10.07	27	.373		
	Total	11.75	31			
Accuracy-Oriented	Between Groups	1.940	4	.485	1.07	.387
	Within Groups	12.1	27	.450		
	Total	14.08	31			
Message Reduction & Alternation	Between Groups	1.83	4	.459	.709	.593
	Within Groups	17.46	27	.647		
	Total	19.30	31			
Nonverbal Strategies while Speaking	Between Groups	1.54	4	.385	.715	.589
	Within Groups	14.55	27	.539		
	Total	16.09	31			

Message Abandonment	Between Groups	.920	4	.230	.302	.874
	Within Groups	20.59	27	.763		
	Total	21.51	31			
Attempt to Think in English	Between Groups	4.438	4	1.109	1.49	.232
	Within Groups	20.06	27	.743		
	Total	24.50	31			
<i>Listening strategies</i>						
Negotiation for Meaning while Listening	Between Groups	1.04	3	.347	.715	.547
	Within Groups	27.18	56	.485		
	Total	28.22	59			
Fluency Maintaining	Between Groups	2.425	3	.808	1.37	.260
	Within Groups	32.94	56	.588		
	Total	35.37	59			
Scanning	Between Groups	1.22	3	.409	.834	.481
	Within Groups	27.42	56	.490		
	Total	28.64	59			
Getting the Gist	Between Groups	1.22	3	.410	.981	.408
	Within Groups	23.37	56	.417		
	Total	24.60	59			
Nonverbal Strategies while Listening	Between Groups	3.71	3	1.239	2.65	.057
	Within Groups	26.09	56	.466		
	Total	29.81	59			
Less Active Listener	Between Groups	7.016	3	2.339	2.22	.096
	Within Groups	58.91	56	1.052		
	Total	65.93	59			
Word-Oriented	Between Groups	.240	3	.080	.167	.918
	Within Groups	26.83	56	.479		

	Total	27.07	59			
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* $P = 0.05$

As shown in Table 4.2.3, the difference in the use of OCSs across the five nationalities is not significant ($p > .05$) in neither of the speaking and listening strategies categories, thus, the primary assumption maintaining that there is not any differences among the students with different nationalities in the use of OCSs is supported.

4.3 Oral Communication Strategies Used by the Male and Female Students

This section provides the result of the analysis conducted to answer the third research question:

3. *Is there any difference in the use of oral communication strategies between male and female students?*

The result of Independent T-test conducted to compare the OCSs as reported by male and female students is represented in Table 4.3.1.

Table 4.3.1 Independent T-test for OCSs across genders

		Mean	SD	Mean difference	Sig.
<i>Speaking strategies</i>					
Social Affective	Female	3.96	.323	.331	.027
	Male	3.63	.472		
Fluency-Oriented	Female	3.56	.685	.354	.131
	Male	3.20	.604		
Negotiation for Meaning while Speaking	Female	3.96	.473	.437	.042
	Male	3.53	.676		

Accuracy-Oriented	Female	3.57	.610	.250	.302
	Male	3.32	.729		
Message Reduction & Alternation	Female	3.87	.645	.406	.148
	Male	3.46	.884		
Nonverbal Strategies while Speaking	Female	3.70	.796	.291	.259
	Male	3.41	.626		
Message Abandonment	Female	2.75	.880	.078	.796
	Male	2.67	.809		
Attempt to Think in English	Female	3.15	.676	.312	.328
	Male	2.84	1.06		
<i>Listening strategies</i>					
Negotiation for Meaning while listening	Female	3.57	.455	-.238	.251
	Male	3.81	.671		
Fluency Maintaining	Female	3.60	.419	-.087	.645
	Male	3.68	.623		
Scanning	Female	3.76	.512	.265	.207
	Male	3.50	.645		
Getting the Gist	Female	3.53	.417	-.265	.203
	Male	3.79	.702		
Nonverbal Strategies while Listening	Female	4.09	.611	.250	.291
	Male	3.84	.700		
Less Active Listener	Female	2.71	.893	.156	.656
	Male	2.56	1.06		
Word-Oriented	Female	3.45	.410	.265	.246
	Male	3.18	.798		

As can be seen in Table 4.3.1, gender differences are significant only in relation to two speaking strategies, that is, *social affective* (.02 < .05), and *negotiating meaning while speaking* (.04 < .05) with females reporting more *social affective* (M = 3.96 vs. 3.63) and *negotiating meaning while speaking* (M = 3.96 vs. 3.53) strategies than their male counterparts. In the other speaking strategies and in none of the listening strategies the difference between the male and female is not significant and the mean difference is higher than the significance level ($p > .05$). However, it is noteworthy that in all the rest of the speaking strategies the females mean was higher than that of the males though the mean differences were not significant.

On the other hand, regarding the listening strategies, the males' means in *negotiation for meaning while listening* (males = 3.81 vs. females = 3.57), *fluency-maintaining* (males = 3.68 vs. females = 3.60), and *getting the gist* (males = 3.79 vs. females = 3.53) were higher than those of the females though the mean differences were not significant.

4.4 Results of the Oral Communication Task

The data obtained from OCS questionnaire was only quantitative in nature. However, to provide more reliable data, more qualitative approaches were also incorporated including the administration of an oral communication task to the four volunteer participants who were master's (N = 2) and PhD (N = 2) students, as well as the interview with the same four participants and the researcher's field notes during the interviews. First of all, the oral communication task proved that the students used a variety of CSs when they performed the communication task, and the application of these strategies is more evident when students do not share the same L1 (Spromberg, 2011).

Second, the results of this task indicated that two master's students and one PhD students whose performance were rated by the researcher, belonged to level four (out of seven) of communicative competence which is characterized by communicating modestly effectively in the task, making frequent but intelligible pauses, showing some flexibility, and maintaining dialogue somewhat independent of the interlocutor. Only one of the PhD students demonstrated a higher performance and was rated as belonging to level five which is characterized by communicating reasonably effectively in the task, speaking fluently but with hesitancy, interacting comfortably and flexibly, and making some contribution to the dialogue.

The results overall suggest that the participants have an average level of ability to communicate effectively in the task. Also, by observing the participants and making field notes, the researcher realized that the participants employed a variety of both listening and speaking strategies including *negotiating for while speaking, non-verbal strategies while speaking, message reduction and alteration, negotiation for Meaning while listening, non-verbal strategies while listening, and getting the gist*. Also, during the oral communication task and the interview, the researcher less often observed the use of strategies like *attempt to think in English* which characterizes high proficiency students, on the one hand, and *message abandonment, less active listener, and word-oriented strategies* which characterizes high proficiency students, on the other hand, and in this respect, and as will be discussed in more depth in the discussion section, the results of the qualitative analysis confirmed the results obtained by the quantitative analysis as presented in the previous sections.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter, first of all, provides a brief overview of the study and summarizes the findings of the study. In the second section, the implications for researchers and practitioners as well as teachers which are drawn based on the findings of the study are discussed. Chapter three deals with limitations of the current study and chapter four suggests a list of areas for further research and investigation of this issue.

5.1 Discussion

The present study inspected the oral communication strategies used by 32 international, post-graduate students majoring in EFL studying in Eastern Mediterranean University. Consistent with some previous studies (e.g., Larenas, 2011; Nakatani, 2006; Zhou, 2014), the findings indicated that the students utilized a large number of communication strategies.

Data obtained from the OCSI to address the first research question, that is, the strategies used by EFL Students, indicated that the participants of this study generally reported using all types of listening and speaking strategies though at varying degrees. *Social affective* was the most frequently reported strategy by the participants. Social affective strategies as manifested in items 1-6 (e.g., *I try to use fillers when I cannot think of what to say*) shows students' control over their affective factors such as anxiety in attempt to behave socially during the interaction and to run a smooth communication. *Negotiation for meaning while speaking* (items 13-16) and *message reduction and alteration* (items 22-23) were the next most frequently

reported speaking strategy used by these participants which highlighted the students' effort to keep interaction going (e.g., *While speaking, I pay attention to the listener's reaction to my speech*) and to escape a communication failure by altering or simplifying a message (e.g., *I use words which are familiar to me*). In other words, to achieve a shared understanding, students are trying to make the input comprehensible for each other. These findings are consistent with the results of Nakatani's (2006) study who found that *Social affective* and *message reduction and alteration* were the two of the most frequently strategies by the high and low oral proficiency group. Likewise, *negotiation for meaning while speaking* was one of the most frequently reported strategies reported by the students. This result is also in corroboration with those found by other researchers (Spromberg, 2011; Yaman et al., 2013). However, there are yet studies with somewhat different findings. Zhou (2014) found that *non-verbal strategy* was the most commonly used strategy by the graduate students.

The next frequent strategies reported by the students were *nonverbal strategies while speaking* (items 24-26) characterized by making the listener understand by nonverbal strategies such as eye contact, facial expressions and gestures which to achieving communication.

I use gestures and facial expressions if I can't communicate what I want to say). Consistent with the results of this study, Nakatani (2006) also found that this strategy was reported highly by both the high proficiency and low proficiency students (M = 4.31 & 3.88, respectively).

Accuracy-oriented (items 17-21) and *fluency-oriented* (items 7-12) strategies showing students' attention to the correctness and accuracy of their speech (e.g., *I correct myself when I notice that I have made a mistake*), as well as to speed, clarity and pronunciation of their speech (e.g., *I try to speak clearly and loudly to make*

myself heard) were also reported as frequent by the students. Moreover, since the participants of this study are at the intermediate level of language proficiency, it is not surprising that their inter-language is not highly developed and they feel the need to reflect on accuracy so they can produce correct sentences during communication. The use of *fluency-oriented* strategy in both high and low proficiency students and the use of *accuracy-oriented* strategy only in high proficiency group was high in Nakatani's (2006) study. These findings highlight the fact that the students consider fluency and accuracy as two major factors contributing to maintaining a successful conversation. These findings were further supported in the interview with the participants. To cite an example, student 3 mentioned that

When I communicate in English, I notice that I frequently stop to check the grammatical accuracy of my sentence in my mind or uh... after I notice that I told a wrong sentence I'll correct it if I can.

On the other hand, *message abandonment* and *attempt to think in English* were the least frequently reported strategies. Whereas *message abandonment* is one of the strategies utilized by low-proficiency students since they have not yet developed sufficient linguistic repertoire to maintain a conversation, *attempts to think in English* is one of the strategies used by high-proficiency students indicating their advanced English level. Low frequency of these two strategies that were also observed in some previous studies (Zhou, 2014) indicating that the participants of this study are in the intermediate level of language proficiency. In fact, students with a low level of language proficiency usually resort to message abandonment (Nakatani, 2006) and some researchers claimed that these strategies hinder mutual understanding (e.g., Dornyei & Scott, 1997). In this regard, interviewee 2 pointed out:

When I face trouble during communication, I rarely stop the conversation or change the topic unless I do not know many words about the topic; instead, if I don't know a particular word, I try to explain it so the listeners understands what I mean.

Similarly, interviewee 3 asserted:

You know, uh... I feel that in this context, with the exception of a few students who are high-proficient or low-proficient users, the rest are intermediate students, and although problems occur, it is not such serious that we have to stop our conversation or change the topic, specifically when we are talking about the academic issues.

These findings were further supported by the results of the oral communication task administered to the four volunteered students who were scored as belonging to level 3-4 signifying an intermediate proficiency level characterized by moderate effective communication, making frequent/some pauses, some degree of flexibility, and the ability to maintain dialogue moderately.

However, these results are not consistent with those of some other studies which indicated that participants follow the use of other strategies like fluency-oriented and accuracy-oriented strategies (Zhou, 2014). Of course, it does not necessarily mean that students do not value the accuracy and fluency of their speech during communication. As argued by Swain (1985) comprehensibility can also be achieved without reliance on correct syntax and morphology. Comprehensibility can be achieved and meaning can be conveyed in many cases through other strategies like the non-verbal strategies the use of which was reported high among the participants. In this line, interviewee 4 also mentioned that:

Communication in this setting is not very difficult... I mean you need not know the meaning of every word. For example, at a shop, you can simply point to the thing you want if you do not know its name.

Regarding the listening strategies, *negotiation for meaning while listening* (items 1-6) and *nonverbal strategies while listening* (items 19-20) were the most frequently reported strategies by the students. *Negotiation for meaning while listening* (such as, *I make a clarification request when I am not sure what the speaker has said*) is mostly characterized by requesting for repetition or clarification, or using a modified version of the utterance to maintain conversational goal whereas *nonverbal strategies while listening* (such as, *I use gestures when I have difficulties in understanding*) refer to using eye contacts, gesture, etc. to maintain conversation. Consistent with the results of the present study, Nakatani (2006) also observed that these two strategies were among of the most commonly reported listening strategy specifically by the high proficiency group. The results of the interview also confirmed this finding. In this regard, interviewee 1 pointed out:

Usually, when feel that the listener cannot understand what I mean, I resort to facial expressions or use my hands, or sometimes do pantomime to help them understand what I mean. Sometimes, using gestures is even more effective than using words as, I believe, all of us have at least some degree of common experiences or backgrounds.

It is worth mentioning that the students participated in the interview used a variety of nonverbal strategies while speaking and listening, and thus, provided natural, real-life evidence for what the strategies students reported to employ during communication in the target language.

Getting the gist (items 13-15) as the third frequent strategy reported by the students as manifested in instances like *I don't mind if I can't understand every single detail*, highlighted the students' effort in order to understand the general idea or the message that the speaker intends to convey. This strategy requires making a guess based on what the speaker has already said and is not usually a strategy utilized by low proficiency students. Also, the utilization of *fluency-maintaining and scanning* (items 6-10) and *scanning* (11-14) strategies indicated that the students try to consider the fluency of the speaker's intonation, etc. (e.g., I pay attention to the speaker's pronunciation), and to reflect on certain points made by the speaker in order to understand what s/he means (e.g., *I pay attention to the first part of the sentence and guess the speaker's intention*). *Scanning* is considered as a useful strategy because even it is sometimes difficult for high proficiency students to get the full grasp of everything said by the speakers, hence, concentrating on main parts of the speakers' speech may help them at least partly figure out the speaker's intention. However, unlike Nakatani's (2006) study, it was not the most frequent strategy reported by the students in this study. *Word-oriented* (items 23-26) characterized by trying to understand the meaning of every single word in order to be able to understand the meaning of the speaker's speech (e.g., *I pay attention to the words which the speaker slows down or emphasizes*). *Word-oriented* was not a very frequent listening strategy ($M = 3.32$) employed by the participants of this study compared to the other strategies. However, the result of some studies is in contradiction with the results of this study, for example, this strategy was the most popular strategy among low proficiency students and the second most common strategy reported by high proficiency students in Nakatani's (2006) study.

Less active listener (items 21-22) refers to strategies that are opposed to active communication strategies are usually utilized by less successful students and represents a negative attitude towards the use of the target language (Huang & Van Naerssen, 1987, cited in Nakatani, 2006). However, it was the least listening strategy used by the participants of this study suggesting that students are active users of the English language. However, this finding is not consistent with the results found by Nakatani (2006) who found that it was a common strategy used by the Japanese students (also see Mei & Nathalang, 2012).

The second research question addressed in this study aimed to explore whether students coming from different ethnic backgrounds utilize different types of oral communication strategies. Similar to the findings of the present study, there are several studies which show that students with different nationalities such as Japanese (Nakatani, 2006), Taiwanese (Kendall et al., 2005), Indonesian (Wahyuni, 2013), Iranian (Moattarian & Tahririan, 2013), Malaysian (Ugla et al., 2013), and Chinese and Arabic (Hua et al., 2012) students.

The findings of the study also indicated that students from all the nationality groups utilized more or less the same degree of oral communication strategies. Although some differences were observed in the type of listening and speaking strategies employed by the students (e.g., *nonverbal strategies while speaking* was the most common strategy by the Iranian students whereas *social-affective strategy* was the most frequently reported strategy by the Turkish students), the differences were not statistically significant across different nationality groups. Since, to the best of the author's knowledge, no studies have tried to compare the CSs utilized by students coming from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds there are not sufficient

literature available so the results of the current study can be compared with. However, there are few related studies that can shed light on cultural differences that are responsible for employment of different communication strategies by students with different nationalities. To elaborate, Levine, Reves, and Leaver (1996) explored how learning strategies can be associated with learners' cultural background. The authors found that immigrant students reported more less-active strategies such as memorization, rote learning, and word-for-word translation into the native language, whereas the Israeli residents utilized a higher degree of communicative strategies. Although these findings highlight the influence of cultural factors on strategy use, they are in contradiction with the results found in the present study. Likewise, Uglá et al. (2012, 2013) administered two separate studies but with the same methodologies on Iraqi and Malaysian students with similar characteristics and the findings indicated that these students used quite different CSs. These findings are in contradiction with the results of this study.

However, the results of the interview and the oral communication task were inconsistent with the results found by the quantitative data. For instance, student 1 mentioned that:

I consider myself as an upper-intermediate EFL speaker and usually do not stop the conversation when I don't understand something. But I usually do not understand particular accents such as those of the Arabic students when they speak English... when I don't understand something, I may ask it once, yet uh... if I don't understand it again I don't as one more time because it may cause my friend's embarrassment or it may be impolite.

Likewise, student 3 pointed out that:

I usually don't understand Africans... only Africans... you know, their style is different, their body language is different. Sometimes, they make me confused, you know... or when I ask for clarification, they do not clarify or say 'let's forget about it'.

As indicated in the above examples as well as the other examples, students coming from different nationalities believed that the communication strategies utilized by them is different from those utilized by students from other nationalities. Furthermore, their comments suggested that employment of different communication strategies do not necessarily contribute to the maintenance of the conversation; it may, rather hinder running a smooth communication.

The third research question addressed in this study intended to identify gender differences in the use of oral communication strategies. The findings indicated that male and female students' use of communication strategies was statistically significant only with regard to two speaking strategies, that is, *social affective* and *negotiating for meaning while speaking* with the females obtaining higher means than the males. These findings support those found by Kaivanpanah et al. (2010). These authors also found no gender differences in the use of communication strategies except the strategies that had a social nature. Likewise, the study carried out by Lai (2010) showed that females were more effective than males in using communication strategies. In fact, some studies show that females are more interested in social activities than their male counterparts (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). These findings are partially supported the results found by Yaman et al. (2013) who observed that negotiation for meaning, compensatory, and getting the gist strategies were the most commonly-used communication strategies among the Turkish female students.

Overall, these findings are very important because they indicate females and males may use different communication strategies or communicate differently. More specifically, females normally surpass males in oral communication even when both

genders are at the same level of proficiency and this finding is in corroboration with findings of most studies (Kaivanpanah et al., 2010).

5.2 Summary and conclusion of the study

International students who peruse their studies at international universities need to use English as an international language in order to communicate with their classmates, professors, and other individuals outside of the educational context. Although communication in English has a number of challenges due to cultural differences and limited language proficiency among the student, they usually try to find some solutions or use communication strategies in order to cope with those challenges raised by that situation. The present study inspected the oral communication strategies (OCSs) used by 32 international, post-graduate students majoring in EFL studying in Eastern Mediterranean University who were selected based on availability sampling. The study used a missed-method design to provide answer to the three following research questions:

1. What oral communication strategies do students employ during communication in English?
2. Is there any difference in the use of oral communication strategies among students with different ethnic backgrounds?
3. Is there any difference in the use of oral communication strategies between male and female students?

The results of the study are briefed out in what follows.

The first research question that aimed to identify oral communication strategies used by EFL students indicated that the participants reported using all types of listening and speaking strategies though at varying degrees. *Social affective* was the most frequently reported strategy by the participants indicating their control over their

affective factors such as anxiety in attempt to behave socially during the interaction and to run a smooth communication. *Negotiation for meaning while speaking* and *message reduction and alteration* were the next most frequently reported speaking strategy used by these participants who highlighted the students' effort to keep interaction going and to escape a communication failure by altering or simplifying a message. The other speaking strategies used by the students included *nonverbal strategies while speaking* characterized by making the listener understand by nonverbal strategies such as eye contact, facial expressions and gestures which contribute to achieving communication, and accuracy-oriented and fluency-oriented strategies showing students' attention to the correctness and accuracy of their speech as well as to speed, clarity and pronunciation of their speech. These findings were consistent with the results found by some other researchers (Nakatani, 2006; Spromberg, 2011; Yaman et al., 2013). Nevertheless, *message abandonment* and *attempt to think in English* were the least frequently reported strategies. Whereas the former is one of the strategies utilized by low-proficiency students, the latter is one of the strategies used by high-proficiency students indicating their advanced English level. Low frequencies of these two strategies were also confirmed by some previous studies (Dornyei & Scott, 1997; Zhou, 2014).

Regarding the listening strategies, *negotiation for meaning while listening* and *nonverbal strategies while listening* were the most frequently reported strategies by the participants and this finding was consistent with the results of Nakatani's (2006) study. Also, the interviews provided natural, real-life evidence for what the strategies students reported to employ during communication in the target language.

Getting the gist, fluency-maintaining and scanning was also other frequently reported strategies by the students; however, these findings were partly in line with the findings of some other studies (Nakatani, 2006). On the other hand, *word-oriented* characterized by trying to understand the meaning of every single word in order to be able to understand the meaning of the speaker's speech and *less active listener* which refers to strategies that are opposed to active communication strategies were not frequent listening strategies by the participants of this study. However, this finding was in contradiction with the findings of the other studies (Mei & Nathalang, 2012; Nakatani, 2006).

The second research question addressed in this study aimed to explore the OCSs used by students coming from different ethnic backgrounds. The findings were in line with the findings of the other studies suggesting that students with different nationalities use an extensive range of CSs (Hua et al., 2012; Moattarian & Tahririan, 2013; Nakatani, 2006; Wahyuni, 2013). Although some differences were observed in the type of listening and speaking strategies employed by the students (e.g., *nonverbal strategies while speaking* was the most common strategy by the Iranian students whereas *social-affective strategy* was the most frequently reported strategy by the Turkish students), the differences were not statistically significant across different nationality groups. Nevertheless, to the best of the author's knowledge, there were no studies comparing the communication strategies used by students from different cultural backgrounds to which the results of the present study can be compared. Only a few related studies (Levine, Reves, & Leaver, 1996) suggest that cultural differences can be responsible for employment of different communication strategies by students with different nationalities. However, the results of the interview were inconsistent with the results found by the quantitative data and the

students explained that their communication strategies are different from those utilized by their friends who come from different ethnic backgrounds.

The third research question intended to identify gender differences in the use of oral communication strategies. The findings indicated that male and female students' use of communication strategies was not statistically significant in all the listening and speaking strategies except in two speaking strategies: *social affective* and *negotiating for meaning while speaking* with the females obtaining higher means than the males. These findings are partially supported the results found by Yaman et al. (2013) who observed that negotiation for meaning, compensatory, and getting the gist strategies were the most commonly-used communication strategies among the Turkish female students.

5.2 Implications of the Study

This study yielded some important implications for all researchers, practitioners and teachers who are interested in or study oral communication strategy use by the international students. These implications are explained in what follows.

This study provided useful insights to instructors to develop a better understanding of the students' OCSs used by the students, and more specifically, by the graduate EFL students. This study examined the OCSs used by the international intermediate students during communication in English as EFL. The most popular OCSs such as *social-affective strategies* highlight the importance of these strategies in maintaining communication by the international students.

As the findings of the present study showed, some strategies are likely to be more common among students coming from a certain ethnic background. These differences are highly associated to the teaching and learning strategies reinforced by

the educational systems in a given country. Therefore, teachers should be aware of this fact and do not attribute any communication breakdown between the international students to their low proficiency.

It is also suggested that (international) students in international contexts should be given the opportunity to communicate with each other in pairs or small groups (Spromberg, 2011). Application of oral communication tasks such as the one employed in this study as well as those suggested by the other researchers (e.g., Mei & Nathalang, 2010) in the classroom and observing the interaction between the students allow would allow teachers to identify the sources of communication breakdown among the international students and offer some solutions. On the other hand, it can also make students familiar with possible challenges that they may encounter during communication, increase their awareness of the strategies they use and in total, help them become more-proficient language users.

Fifth, the methodological implication of the study is that data analyze is based on triangulation of the data from both qualitative and quantitative sources unlike many of the previous studies that were only questionnaire-based, and thus, shed doubt on the accuracy of students' responses (Mirzaei&Heidari, 2012; Sener&Balkir, 2013; Uglá et al., 2013). Some researchers emphasize the employment of qualitative approaches as well (Alwai, 2016; Macaro, 2006; Zhou, 2014) particularly for studying oral communication strategies. When data are collected from various sources, there is more confidence in the reliability of the data. Similarly, in the present study the interview and the oral communication task not only confirmed the results obtained by OCSI but also provided additional data on how these strategies are employed by the students, and what challenges they experience while interacting

with their international counterparts. Therefore, researchers are suggested to use similar methodologies for investigating this topic.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Like most studies, the present study has some limitations. Since students coming from the Middle East comprise the major population of the university, the study sample was limited to five nationalities: Turkish, Iranian, Arabic, African, and Others.

Also, as explained earlier, there is scarcity of literature on investing and comparing and contrasting OCSs among students with different nationalities so it was difficult to explore some findings of the study by reflecting on the results found by the previous studies.

Although the present study had a strong mixed-method design and tried to provide both qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of sources including questionnaire, interview, oral communication task and field notes, the qualitative data collection was administered only to four students which is a very limited number.

Finally, since the OCSI is originally designed to assess Japanese students' use of OCSs, application of this instrument in other contexts requires validation.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations explained above calls a need for further investigation of this issue or more specifically researchers are suggested:

1. To investigate OCS use by the international students across a wider range of nationalities and among a larger sample size;

2. To administer the study to different proficiency level groups since the present study only investigated OCSs reported by the intermediate students;
3. To conduct more qualitative approaches such as observation and identify OCSs that the international students use during real communication;
4. To extend the scope of the study by addressing more factors such as task type, the effect of training, etc.
5. To replicate the same study in the context of EMU to provide more evidence for the findings obtained in the present study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Oral Communication Strategy Inventory

(Adopted from Nakatani, 2006)

Background information

Age:

Gender: Male Female

Nationality:

Education status: Master PhD

Instruction

Please read the following items and check a response that is true for you.

PART1: Strategies for coping with speaking problems during communicative tasks

		Never or almost never	Generally not true	Somewhat true	Generally true	Always or almost always	Sum	Average
A	1. I try to relax when I feel anxious.							
	2. I try to enjoy the conversation.							
	3. I try to give a good impression to the listener.							
	4. I actively encourage myself to express what I want to say.							
	5. I don't mind taking risk even though I might make mistakes.							
	6. I try to use fillers when I cannot think of what to say.							
B	7. I pay attention to my rhythm and intonation.							
	8. I pay attention to my pronunciation.							
	9. I pay attention to the conversation flow.							
	10. I change my way of saying things according to the context in order to continue conversations.							

	11. Itake my timetoexpresswhatIwanttosay.								
	12. Itrytospeakclearlyandloudlytomakemyself heard.								
	13. ImakecomprehensioncheckstoensurethelistenerunderstandswhatIwanttosay.								
	14. IrepeatwhatIwanttosayuntilthelistener understands.								
	15. Whilespeaking,Ipayattentiontothelistener'sreactiontomyspeech.								
	16. Igiveexamplesifthelistenerdoesn'tunderstandwhatIamsaying.								
D	17. Ipayattentiontogrammarandwordorderduringconversation.								
	18. InoticemyselfusinganexpressionwhichfitsarulethatIhavelearned.								
	19. IcorrectmyselfwhenInoticethatIhavemadeamistake.								
	20. Itrytoemphasizethesubjectandverbofthesentence.								
	21. I try to talk like a native speaker.								
E	22. Ireducethemessageandusesimpleexpressions.								
	23. Iusewordswhicharefamiliartome.								
F	24. Ireplacetheoriginalmessagewithanothermessagebecauseoffeelingincapableofexecutingmyoriginalintent.								
	25. ItrytomakeeyecontactwhenIamtalking.								
	26. IusegesturesandfacialexpressionsifIcan'tcommunicatewhatIwanttosay.								
G	27. Ileaveamessageunfinishedbecauseofsomelanguagedifficulty.								
	28. IaskotherpeopletohelpwhenIcan'tcommunicatewell.								
	29. IgiveupwhenIcan'tmakemyselfunderstood.								
	30. IabandontheexecutionofaverbalplanandjustsaysomewordswhenIdon'tknowhowtoexpressmyself.								
H	31. IthinkfirstofasentenceIalreadyknowinEnglishandthentrytochangeittofitthesituation.								

32. I try to think of what I want to say not in my native language but English.								
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PART 2: Strategies for coping with listening problems during communicative tasks

		Never or almost never	Generally not true	Somewhat true	Generally true	Always or almost always true	Sum	Average
I	1. I ask for repetition when I can't understand what the speaker has said.							
	2. I make a clarification request when I am not sure what the speaker has said.							
	3. I ask the speaker to use easy words when I have difficulties in comprehension.							
	4. I ask the speaker to slow down when I can't understand what the speaker has said.							
	5. I make it clear to the speaker what I haven't been able to understand.							
J	6. I pay attention to the speaker's rhythm and intonation.							
	7. I send continuation signals to show my understanding in order to avoid conversation gaps.							
	8. I use circumlocution to react to the speaker's utterance when I don't understand his/her intention well.							
	9. I ask the speaker to give an example when I am not sure what he/she has said.							
	10. I pay attention to the speaker's pronunciation.							
K	11. I pay attention to the subject and verb of the sentence when I listen.							
	12. I especially pay attention to the interrogati							

	vewhenIlistentoWH–questions.							
	13. Ipayattentiontothefirstpartofthes entenceandguessthespeaker’sinte ntion.							
	14. Itrytocatchthespeaker’smainpoint.							
L	15. Idon’tmindifIcan’tunderstandevery singedetail.							
	16. Ianticipatewhatthespeakerisgoingto saybasedonthecontext.							
	17. Iguessthespeaker’sintentionbasedon whathe/shesaidsofar.							
	18. Itrytorespondtothespeakereven whenIdon’tunderstandhim/her perfectly.							
M	19. IusegestureswhenIhavedifficulties inunderstanding.							
	20. Ipayattentiontothespeaker’s eye-contact, facialexpressionand gestures.							
N	21. Itrytotranslateintonativelanguagel ittlebylittletounderstandwhatthe speakerhasaid.							
	22. Ionlyfocusonfamiliar expressions.							
O	23. Ipayattentiontothewordswhichthe speaker slowsdownoremphases.							
	24. Iguessthespeaker’sintentionby pickingupfamiliarwords.							
	25. Itrytocatcheverywordthatthe speakeruses.							
	26. Ipayattentiontothefirstwordto judgewhetheritisaninterrogative sentenceornot.							

Date:

Signature:

Appendix B: The Oral Communication Task

(Adopted from Nakatani, 2005)

Task: Travel Agency

Role A: You are visiting a travel agency in Nicosia. One month ago you booked a cheap tour to Girne for three days starting tomorrow. This tour was advertised in a newspaper ad at \$150. You have come here to get the travel voucher. Please ask about the payment method and flight schedule for tomorrow.

Role B: You are working at a travel agency. You are a new employee and do not know how to access the customers' data, which the clerk before you used. You can only accept cash or a credit card. All bargain 3-day tours starting tomorrow are booked. The following tours are available: Bargain tour for 4 days: \$200, the flight leaves at 10 a.m. and arrives at 11 a.m. Standard tour for 3 days: \$220, the flight leaves at 10 a.m. and arrives at 11 a.m.

Appendix C: The Oral Communication Assessment Scale for EFL Students

(Adopted from Nakatani, 2005)

Level 7

Almost always communicates effectively in the task
Speech is generally natural and continuous.
Can interact in a real-life way with the interlocutor.
Can generally develop the dialogue spontaneously with few errors.

Level 6

Generally communicates effectively in the task
Is not quite fluent but interacts effectively.
Can generally react flexibly.
Makes a positive contribution to the dialogue.

Level 5

Communicates reasonably effectively in the task
Is sometimes fluent but with hesitations.
Can interact fairly comfortably and gain flexibility.
Makes some contribution to the dialogue.

Level 4

Communicates moderately effectively in the task
Makes some pauses but fairly intelligible.
Shows some flexibility.
Is somewhat independent of the interlocutor in the dialogue.

Level 3

Communicates modestly in the task
Makes frequent pauses but somewhat intelligible.
Shows little flexibility.
Can maintain dialogue but in a rather passive way.

Level 2

Communicates marginally in the task
Makes numerous pauses, at times long ones.
Still depends on the interlocutor but begins to interact a little with him/her.
Given help, communicates quite basically. Requires some tolerance from the interlocutor.

Level 1

Communicates extremely restrictedly in the task
Can answer simple questions but with numerous long pauses.
Depends on interlocutor with only partial contribution to dialogue.
Some questions have to be repeated or rephrased.

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. Do you experience any challenges when communicating in English with your international classmates or friends?
2. What strategies do you usually use in order to cope with challenges which you experience during the communication?
3. Do you think your communication strategies are different from those used by your international friends?
4. What strategies do you think are more important for an effective communication to take place?