

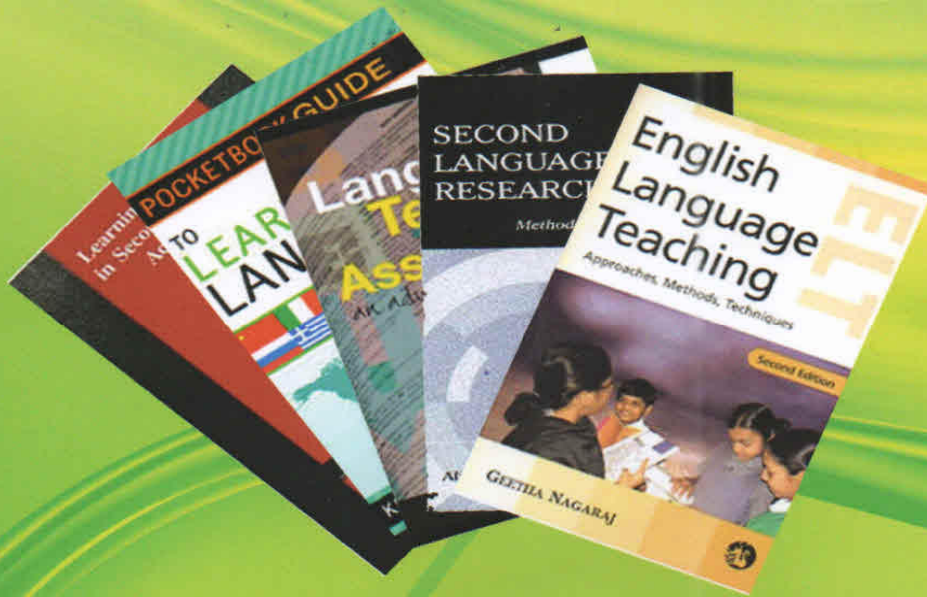


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TON DUC THANG UNIVERSITY



PROCEEDINGS OF
THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

ICLD 2016



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PROCEEDINGS OF
THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
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Communication Strategies Employed by Indonesian EFL Learners

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Abstract

Communication strategies are very important especially for EFL learners. It needs to be discussed and studied extensively since most students cannot well explore the use of English as a target language. The condition in Indonesia shows that only few students can speak in the target language confidently after learning English for six years or more. Moreover, they often get difficulties when they speak English to communicate with others. To overcome communication barriers, the students can communicate effectively by language mixing, using gesture, asking for correction, or translating words. Those are called communication strategies (CSs). Thus, this article aims to analyze the communication strategies of Tarone's taxonomy used by students in speaking class at the second semester of English education study program. The research design of this study is descriptive qualitative, all the data are obtained through observation and in depth interview for three students in different level; passive, moderate, and active. The results show that passive level learner used all CSs with frequent of 68 times. While the moderate level learner used some CSs with frequent of 28 times, and the active level learner used only one CSs with frequent of 3 times. In addition, the dominant CSs used by passive and moderate level learner is borrowing and the dominant CSs used by active level learners is paraphrased.

Keywords: *Communication Strategies, EFL, Learners*

1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the important skills should be mastered by students. By speaking, students can express their ideas, opinion, and information orally. According to Tarigan (1992, p. 8), "speaking is the skill intended message orally. It means that speaking is a medium to express ideas, feeling, emotions and so forth." Through speaking, students can build communication and interaction with others and make them understand. Every language learner is expected to communicate in a target language fluently and appropriately. Unfortunately, not all people are able to use English well as a target language in communication though they have already learned English for years.

The condition in Indonesia shows that only few students can speak in the target language confidently after learning English for six years or more. Some language learners avoid using target language because they are afraid of communication gap and others try to utilize strategies to overcome their communication problems. The communication problems itself sometimes come from learner's themselves that cause a breakdown in their communication for example nervousness, confident, and feelings. Cervantes and Rodriguez (2012) states "when language learners do not know how to say a word in English, they can communicate effectively by using their hands, imitating sounds, inventing new words or describing what they mean, these ways of communicating are communication strategies." Hence, it gives an idea to the researcher to investigate communications strategies used by EFL learners to overcome communication barriers.

Communication strategies are one of the strategies that can be explored to develop learners speaking proficiency. Bialystok (1990) defines communication strategies are "the ways to solve the problem and the difficulties in communication." Communication strategy is a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express their message when facing some difficulties in anticipating the communication gaps in an interaction. Tarone (1980) studies communication strategies from the perspective of social interaction. Tarone elaborates the definition of communication strategies by saying: "...mutual attempts of two interlocutors to agree on meaning in situations where the requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared" (1983: 125). She summarizes communication strategies under the following main aspects:

Avoidance

1. Topic avoidance: the learner simply tries not to talk about concepts for which the target language item or structure is not known
2. Message abandonment: the learner begins to talk about a concept but is unable to continue and stop in mid-utterance.

Paraphrase

1. Approximation : the learner uses a single target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features in common with the

	desired item to satisfy the speaker (e.g. "pipe" for "water pipe")
	2. Word coinage: the learner makes up a new word or phrase in order to communicate a desired concept (e.g. "airball" for "ballon")
	3. Circumlocution: The learner describes the properties of the object or action instead of using the appropriate target language item or structure (e.g. "She is, uh, smoking something. I don't know what its name is. That's, uh, Persian, and we use in Turkey, a lot of")
Borrowing	1. Literal translation: The learner translates word for word from the native language (e.g. "he invites him to drink" for "They toast one another")
	2. Language mix: The learner uses the native language term without bothering to translate (e.g. "balon" for "ballon" or "tirtil" for "turtle")
Appeal for Assistance	The learners ask for the correct term (e.g. "what is this?", "what called?")
Mime	The learner uses nonverbal tactics in place of lexical item or action (e.g. "clapping one's hands to illustrate applause" or to accompany another communication strategy, for example "it's about this long")

The reason above brings the researcher to investigate more about communication strategies used by students of different level; passive, moderate and active learner of English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo in Indonesia. The research attempts to answer the following questions.

1. What are the communication strategies used by three university students of different level; passive, moderate, and active learner in learning speaking?
2. What is the dominant communication strategies used by three university students of different level; passive, moderate, and active learner in learning speaking?

2. Methodology

In conducting this research, the researcher uses a descriptive qualitative. The primary aim of this research was to identify and describe communication strategies proposed by Tarone's taxonomy utilized by 3 (three) university students in different level. The data in this research were the communication strategies used by the learners during their speaking activity. The sources of the data were the communication strategies used in the second semester students' speaking both verbal and non-verbal. In this study, the researcher carried out some steps in collecting the data: observing the way the learners used communication strategies proposed by Tarone both verbal and non-verbal by writing down into paper, recording their speaking and their non-verbal language, transcribing the oral speaking of the students, selecting the data concerning with the research questions, and identifying the CSs which exist in the discussion from the subjects.

After conducting the procedures of data collection then the researcher analyzed by non-statistical methods such as reviewing the data that had been collected, classifying and calculating the frequency of CSs used by the three subjects based on the result of analyzing to find the dominant one. The last step was drawing conclusion based on the data analysis. These procedures were in line with Dornyei's statement (2007, p. 24) that qualitative research involves data collection procedure that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by non-statistical methods.

In the present study, 3 students of different levels of speaking proficiency were chosen as the subject; they are a passive, a moderate and an active learner who joined in speaking 2 class at English Education Study Program of Teacher Training and Education Faculty in Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo in Indonesia. The passive learner refers to the student who came from the last 25% in their score of their speaking 1 based on the average grades of the first semester. The moderate learner refers to the student who came from in the middle 50% in the same class, while the active learner refers to the students who were ranks at the highest 25% in the same class. All subjects studied English formally for six years in junior and senior high schools and had been taking courses for one semester or a half year as university students. The average age of these subjects were nineteen.

This research was held in the class room in English Education Study Program. It was chosen purposively under consideration that the researcher got a permission to conduct a research easily from the lecturer of speaking 2 class. The classroom setting was set as naturally as possible to cope with the need of the research. In accord to this, the observer took the seat inside of the room when observing the class. Therefore, the presence of the observer did not disturb the classroom interaction.

The data in this research were the students' communication strategies both verbal and nonverbal. The verbal data were in the form of words, phrases and sentences uttered by the students during the dialogue. Meanwhile, non-verbal data were students' mime. According to Tao Tan (2008; 56) mime

requires a person to use body language, facial expressions and gestures to convey meaning. Thus, the researcher of this study limited the students' mime in the form of students' facial-expression, gestures and other body language when the students got difficulties to utter meaning.

In this study, the researcher played a role as a non-participant observer to collect the data. The researcher did not get involved in the interaction. The researcher just sat inside of the room to note the communication strategies used by the 3 subjects. While observing the classroom, the researcher brought observation sheet and video recorder. Video utilized by the researcher in the classroom in order to get the visualization of the subjects to see their mime.

Additionally, the interview was conducted to get supplementary data. This technique was done to capture the phenomena of students' communication strategies in learning especially from their own perspectives. This technique was necessary to crosscheck out the result of data gotten. Hence, the data gotten from the results of observation were validated with the data taken from interview.

3. Findings and Discussion

In this section, the communication strategies (CSs) used by passive learner, moderate learner and active learner are presented and discussed.

The teaching learning process was conducted by the teacher in two meetings a week. For both meetings the teacher assigned the students into a group discussion and gave them a topic. A group discussion consist of 10 students which the teacher placed the three subjects in the same group. For the first meeting the group was given a topic "Teacher Center Learning and Student Center Learning" and the second meeting the teacher gave a topic "ASEAN Economic Community". For each meeting, the group was asked to discuss the topic within 45 minutes facilitated by the moderator.

Communication Strategies used by three university students of different level: passive, moderate, and active.

The data of Communication Strategies (CSs) used by three university students of different level are reflected in the total of CSs used passive level learner (PLL), CSs used by moderate level learner (MLL) and CSs used by active level learner (ALL).

Table 1: CSs used by passive level learner (PLL)

Communication Strategy		Frequency		Total Frequency
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	
Avoidance	Topic Avoidance ¹⁾	4	4	13
	Message Abandonment ²⁾	2	3	

Paraphrase	Approximation ³⁾	0	1	10
	Word Coinage ⁴⁾	1	1	
	Circumlocution ⁵⁾	3	4	
Borrowing	Literal Translation ⁶⁾	5	3	25
	Language mix ⁷⁾	9	8	
Appeal for Assistance ⁸⁾		4	5	9
Mime ⁹⁾		5	6	11
Total		33	35	68

Table 1 shows that PLL utilized all of CSs during the discussion. It presents that the highest frequency of CSs used by PLL is borrowing (25 times) and the second highest frequency is avoidance (13 times). Consecutively, mime (11 times), paraphrase (10 times) and appeal for assistance (9 times).

The following example illustrates how PLL used avoidance strategies when the moderator gave questions to her.

- 1) Moderator : How about you Wanda (PLL),
what do you know
about teacher center learning and Student center
learning?
- PLL : I think TCL and SCL ... eee... it is not important
for us.. ee.. I
think.. yea the important is we are studying.. yea
study and learn
- 2) Moderator : Well know go to the next, ok
Wanda (PLL) we
know that we have to be ready to face the ASEAN
Economic Community, so what do you think if so
many English Teachers from other countries come
to Indonesia and work in our country?
- PLL : In my opinion.. I think.. ee.. I think It is good..
ouh sorry It is not good.. but.. apa yaaaa.. (quit
and smile)

Excerpt 1) and 2) were taken from the whole transcription of the students' discussion in meeting 1 and meeting 2 of speaking classroom. It showed that PLL utilized topic avoidance in meeting 1 and message abandonment in meeting 2. It seemed that she did not know about the topic and unable to continue her utterances. Besides, PLL also used the aspects of

paraphrase of CSs in meeting 1 and meeting 2. The following excerpt illustrates the used of paraphrase by PLL.

- 3) PLL : but if we.. ee..we are as a consumenten (for consumer) for our product in our country .. ee.. it is good...

In the aspect of paraphrase of CSs the researcher only found approximation used by PLL in meeting 2. The excerpt 3) implies that PLL used approximation in meeting 2 under the topic of ASEAN Economic Community. It shows that she wanted to say "consumer" but she employed an Indonesian which is semantically in common with the targeted language "consumenten". Other examples of paraphrase used by PLL were word coinage and circumlocution, as the excerpt follows:

- 4) PLL : in our country in our area..we must introduce the product of our culture example the food ..ee like.. sate, soto, pecel...

- 5) PLL : eeee and we must to keep our culture and the karakteristik in Indonesia about fashion like batik, songket and the tradisional market of food... paskul what is paskul? The center of people sell food??

It was found in meeting 2 when the PLL tried to explain the preparation to face ASEAN economic community. It implies the PLL used word coinage "area" for "region" and circumlocution "the center of people sell food" for "food court". The aspects of borrowing were also uttered by PLL both in meeting 1 and meeting 2.

- 6) PLL : oh sorry what is pendekatan ..approach yes approach, so approach learning teacher center is one way traffic ...means that teacher give knowledge to the students, and they just listen.

The excerpt 5) indicates that PLL used literal translation which is strongly supported by Tarone's taxonomy. It was found in meeting 1 under the topic of TCL and SCL which PLL translated word for word from Indonesian to English, "learning teacher center is one way traffic, means that teacher give knowledge to the students and they just listen" for "teacher centered learning is an approach which the teacher explains, while the students exclusively listen". Another aspect of borrowing also found in meeting 2 under the topic of ASEAN economic community.

- 7) PLL : eeee and we must to keep our culture and the karakteristik in Indonesia

It can be seen from the excerpt 7) that PLL used Indonesian term without bothering to translate in English, "karakteristik" for "characteristic", according to Tarone (1983) it is called language mix. Besides, the passive level learner mostly asked for the correction when she felt hesitate in saying something. It shows from the following excerpt:

- 8) PLL : ...the traditional market of food... paskul what is paskul? The center of people sell and buy a good food...

Based on Tarone's taxonomy this kind of CSs is called Appeal for assistance which the PLL asked for help or correction from her friends. Excerpt 8) is the example when PLL asked for help "what is paskul?". The last communication strategies used by PLL was Mime. The researcher decided the PLL's mime was when she got difficulties in saying word, sentence or phrase. It is supported by Tao Tan (2008) that mime requires facial expression, gesture and other body languages to convey meaning, for instance;

- 9) When PLL wanted to say "we have higher motivation than..." she used inappropriate term by saying "we have high...high..high...eee high.. (she rolled the hands up and down while she closed her eyes many times and she could not say it)

When it was checked in interview, it was found that PLL did not understand about the question posted by the moderator. Moreover, she got hard to explain it in English and decided to keep silent or avoid the topic given. She was worried and nervous to speak up. The results from the interview also signified that PLL never practice her English in the daily life and lack of English vocabulary. As the result, she frequently used her mime to express what she was saying. Even, she mostly used literal translation and also language mix from English to Indonesian and vice versa.

Alike with passive level learner (PLL), the moderate level learner (MLL) also discussed the same topic in meeting 1 and meeting 2 of speaking 2 class. The result of CSs used by MLL can be seen from the table below:

Table 2: CSs used by moderate level learner (MLL)

Communication Strategy		Frequency		Total Frequency
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	
Avoidance	Topic Avoidance ¹⁾	0	2	2
	Message Abandonment ²⁾	0	0	
Paraphrase	Approximation ³⁾	0	0	1
	Word Coinage ⁴⁾	0	1	
	Circumlocution ⁵⁾	0	0	
Borrowing	Literal Translation ⁶⁾	4	3	15
	Language mix ⁷⁾	3	5	
Appeal for Assistance ⁸⁾		2	4	6
Mime ⁹⁾		2	2	4
Total		11	17	28

The findings of the research (see Table 2) show that MLL does not use all aspect of CSs. However, it proves that MLL tends to use borrowing (15 times) for his communication strategies. Then, appeal for assistance (6 times) and mime (4 times). The lowest frequencies used by MLL are avoidance (2 times in term of topic voidance) and paraphrase (1 time in term of word coinage).

The researcher did not find the aspects of CSs such as message abandonment, approximation and circumlocution used by MLL both in meeting 1 and meeting 2. The following excerpts illustrate the use of CSs by moderate level learner.

- (1) Moderator : And how about you Azmi (MLL), what do you know about AEC?
 MLL : ok What do you know about AEC...ee.. AEC is Asean Economic Community... oh I'm sorry I'm sorry Maybe I'm Sleepy.... MEA is a compass of some countries.... (In Indonesia MEA stands for "masyarakat ekonomi asia" for AEC)

From Excerpt (1) shows that MLL seemed avoid the topic in meeting 2. When the moderator asked him to explain about AEC, he unexpectedly repeated the question given and said the acronym of EAC instead of answering the question. Moreover, he also talked something else during his explanation about AEC.

- (4) MLL : we know the economic condition in our country was good. But now it is weaken...

The excerpt 4) was found in meeting 2 when the MLL talked about the economic condition in Indonesia, and he said "weaken" instead of "decrease". It implies the MLL used word coinage which the learner made up a new word in order to communicate a desired concept (Tarone, 1983).

- (6) MLL : In the process of teaching learning... the student can ask to the teacher and the teacher also can ask to the students to know the students' understanding

Excerpt (6) implies that MLL used literal translation in meeting 1 under the topic of TCL and SCL. MLL translated word for word from Indonesian to English "In the process of teaching learning, the student can ask to the teacher and the teacher also can ask to the students to know the students' understanding" for "in the process of teaching learning, question and answer method can be used to know the students' comprehension".

Another aspect of borrowing in CSs proposed by Tarone also utilized by MLL in meeting 2, it shows from the following excerpt:

- (7) MLL : Sometimes the teacher uses different ..ee.. metode or teknik, sorry.. how to say it? eeeee?

The excerpt (7) presents that MLL implemented the language mix when he said “*metode*” for “method” and “*teknik*” for “technique”. These CSs were found in meeting 1.

Furthermore, the moderate level learner also utilized appeal for assistance strategies in meeting 1 and meeting 2 as the following excerpt;

(8) MLL : Sometimes the teacher uses different ..ee..
metode or teknik, sorry.. how to say it? (in meeting 1)

MLL : we know that our government gives a...
himbauan.. sorry what is in English? Himbauan??
Oh yea admonition...(in meeting 2)

From the excerpt above, it appears that MLL asked for the correction term and it is called appeal for assistance (Tarone, 1983) such as “how to say it?” and “what is in English?”. Like passive level learner, moderate level learner also employed mime as communication strategies when he found difficulties to convey meaning. For example;

(9) It appeared when the MLL wanted to say “our own country” in excerpt “in Indonesia.. we can save our self country..eemm sorry I mean our.. our.. our country of our self.. sorry? eee.. (in this condition the MLL clapped his chest and nodded his head while he spoke “our..our..our” and he could not say “our own....”)

Those findings were crosschecked in interview. MLL stated that he was highly motivated to speak with her friends but sometimes he was embarrassed when he spoke with his friends who are better than him. The MLL seemed that he was interested in speaking class and like having chat with his friends, unfortunately his grammar became the problem for him so he could not explore his opinion well. Fortunately, he tried to develop his understanding about the topic given by listening other students’ opinion and made little note to catch his information. His statement also indicated that he practices English outside the speaking class.

Unlike PLL and MLL who used many strategies in their communication, active level learner (ALL) only used one CSs. It shows from the following table.

Table 3: CSs used by active level learner.

Communication Strategy		Frequency		Total Frequency
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	
Avoidance	Topic Avoidance ¹⁾	0	0	0
	Message Abandonment ²⁾	0	0	0
Paraphrase	Approximation ³⁾	0	0	0

	Word Coinage ⁴⁾	0	0	0
	Circumlocution ⁵⁾	2	1	3
Borrowing	Literal	0	0	0
	Translation ⁶⁾			
	Language mix ⁷⁾	0	0	0
Appeal for Assistance ⁸⁾		0	0	0
Mime ⁹⁾		0	0	0
Total		2	1	3

The table 3 presents that ALL used only one aspect of communication strategies. She never used avoidance, borrowing, appeal for assistance and mime strategies to convey meaning. The ALL seems that she is a good user of English. She has a good fluency in speaking even though sometimes she uses paraphrase of CSs that lightly hard to be understood. One of those paraphrases of communication strategies used by ALL is circumlocution with frequent of 3 times. As illustrate below:

- 4) ALL : for a creative teacher, she or he has so many ways to make a good interaction in the classroom, by using TCL or SCL, using Communicative learning.. or Based text, scientific or something else..I don't know what its calledapproach, technique or method..

The excerpt above implies that ALL tried to describe the type of approaches which can be used by the teacher, but she could not mention it in appropriate term. In contrast, during the discussion the ALL seemed relax and enjoyed it. Her gesture also indicated that she made her friend understood with what she was saying and engaged actively during the discussion class.

The result from interview implied that ALL was very good in speaking class. She claimed that she tried to increase her exposure to English by using English everyday with the people who master English well, by joining some competition, such as speech contest, debate, or storytelling, and actively used her English during the instruction in the classroom.

Dominant communication strategies used by three university students of different level; passive, moderate, and active learner

Concerning the dominant CSs used by three university students of different level, table 1 shows the dominant CSs used by PLL is borrowing with total frequency of 25 times. It is followed by MLL who also utilized borrowing as the dominant one with total frequency of 15 times (see table 2). Meanwhile, from table 3 shows that ALL only used one of CSs as the dominant one. The only CSs used by ALL is paraphrase (3 times).

4. Implications, Suggestion for future research and Conclusion

In general, the research has arrived at some evidence of communication strategies used by three students of different level in speaking classroom. The activities created in speaking classroom offer the students with the opportunities to communicate with each other and made them possible to explore the CSs; avoidance, paraphrase, borrowing, appeal for assistance and mime. In particular, it can be concluded that passive level learner (PLL) uses all CSs in speaking activities by frequent of 68 times, while moderate level learner (MLL) some CSs by frequent of 28 times and active level learner (ALL) uses only one CSs in speaking activities by frequent of 3 times.

Considering the conclusion above, we may imply that the use of communication strategies is a way to solve communication breakdown especially for learner who does not have high English proficiency. Therefore, the implication of using CSs also can help the EFL learners to explore their ideas and feelings into speaking so that the learners are able to communicate in the target language.

In this study the researcher used only three students as the subject as the limitation. Thus, it is suggested for future researchers to use more than three students for his/her subject and explore more about CSs in other days and different occasions. The researcher also hopes other researchers to utilize the most recent theory of CSs which be more complete.

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