Communication Strategies in Mobile-Phone Interactions in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT :

The research study investigated the oral communication strategies used by forty-eight Taiwanese students of Shu Zen College of Medicine and Management (SZMC) majoring in English. The students were allowed to have a cell phone conversation with a partner within three minutes. A list of topics was presented to each pair five minutes before the conversation started. Their conversations were video-taped and transcribed , and a frequency count of their communication strategies was conducted. Results of the study showed that both first-year and fourth-year students used direct, interactional, and indirect types of communication strategies. The fourth-year students, however, had more communication strategies and the frequency of some strategies was much higher. A significant relationship existed between the choice of communication strategies and the year level of the students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication strategies are associated with communication problems. When second/foreign language learners experience difficulty in expressing themselves either because of their own or their addressee's limited command of the language, they employ verbal and nonverbal means to help themselves. To ensure that the message they want to convey is understood as intended, they have to use strategies that would repair communication bogdowns.

Learners' communication strategies have been a subject of research for several years. Most of the studies started in the 70s, (Varadi,1973; Tarone,1977), went on until the 80s (Corder,1981, Faerch & Kasper,1983b; Bialystok,1983; Paribakt,1985), continued until the 90s(Chen 1990; Paulisse,1994; Dornyei and Scott, 1997), and even in the 2000s (Rojo-Laurilla, 2004).

The researchers either came up with their own taxonomies or modified those of the others. Some reviewed the definitions and taxonomies of past researches done (Poulisse, 1994) and (Dornyei and Scott, 1997). Others did empirical studies related to proficiency like those of Chen (1990) and the Nijmegen group (1990).Most of the studies conducted, however, dealt on the verbal communication of the English language while a few investigated the written communication aspect (Frantzen & Rissel,1987; Kumaravadivelu, 1988; Bailey, 1992; Yarmohammadi & Seif, 1992; and Cusipag, 1996).

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES AND LITERATURE

Dornyei and Scott (1997) did a very comprehensive review of the definitions and taxonomies of communication strategies done in two decades – from1970 to 1990. They found out that two defining criteria, *problem-orientedness* and *consciousness,* were

consistently mentioned. They believed that such criteria lacked clarity which partly contributed to the vast diversity in CS (communication strategies) research findings.

Prior to Dornyei and Scott's (1997) review, Poulisse (1994) made a review of the definitions of communication strategies given by past researchers, including their taxonomies. The one given by Faerch and Kasper (1983), according to him, was the most widely used – that CS are "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal" (p.620).

Most of the early studies, according to Poulisse, were exploratory and too small-scale to allow quantitative analysis. He added further,

> The studies' greatest value therefore lies in the practical experience gained in using different experimental tasks. The most stable theoretical finding was that CS use is proficiency-related. Not only do less proficient L2 learners use more CS than advanced learners, they also make more frequent use of L1- based transfer strategies. Another important finding of the early studies was that CS use appeared to be task-specific. This convinced later researchers of the necessity of using a variety of elicitation methods (pp.621-623).

Other theoretical findings were considered in more comprehensive studies such as those done by the University of Nijmegen researchers (1990), Si-quing (1990), Yarmohammadi and Seif (1982), Bou-Franch (1994), and Rojo-Laurilla (2004). The Nijmegen group tried to investigate the proficiency effect, the relationship between CS use in L1 and L2, and the effectiveness of various CS types. Their findings indicated that the least proficient learners did not always use

most transfer strategies although they clearly used most CS. In the conversations, all learner groups used transfer strategies in approximately 20 percent of the cases. In another study, Si-quing (1990) found out from twelve Chinese EFL learners that those with low-proficiency significantly outnumbered the CS employed by the high-proficiency learners. Linguistic-based CSs were more extensively used by the high-proficient learners whereas knowledge-based and repetition CSs were more extensively used by the low –proficient learners. The high- proficient learners were more efficient in the use of CSs then were the low-proficient learners.

In an experiment conducted by Yarmohammadi and Seif (1992 in Cusipag,1996) in the written and oral performances of 51 college Persian second language learners of English, it was revealed that the learners' communication strategies were observed to be the same in both oral and written tasks except for cooperative strategies, mime, and retrieval strategies which were specific oral performances. On the other hand, in a conversational discourse of twenty (20) Spanish learners of English examined by Bou-Franch (1994), borrowing, foreignizing, request for help, code switching, and mime were used more than twice the strategies approximation, description, and mime. Likewise, Rojo-Laurilla (2004) analyzed thirteen (13) speech samples from the advanced oral communication students of De La Salle University-Manila. She came up with fourteen (14) strategies and the most used were fillers , self- repetition , and mime.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on two theories, the first of which is *strategic competence*, defined by Canale and Swain (1980) as " a verbal and nonverbal CS that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence." Brown (1987)

stressed that "it is a competence underlying our ability to make repairs, to cope with imperfect knowledge, and to sustain communication," while Oxford (1990) referred to it as "strategies used to make up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar and vocabulary. Another theory is *interlanguage* which, according to Selinker (1972), refers to "the stages of development one goes through as he gains proficiency in the language"(Cusipag, 1996).Richards (1992) defines it as "the type of language produced by second-and foreign-language learners who are in the

process of learning a language." Learner errors may be caused by borrowing patterns from the mother tongue, extending patterns from the target language or expressing meanings using the words which are already known.

Based on theories underlying this study and the different studies and literature along this line, the following typology of oral communication strategies was drawn up from Dornyei and Scott's (1997) list. The strategies were examined in the twenty-four conversations used in the study.
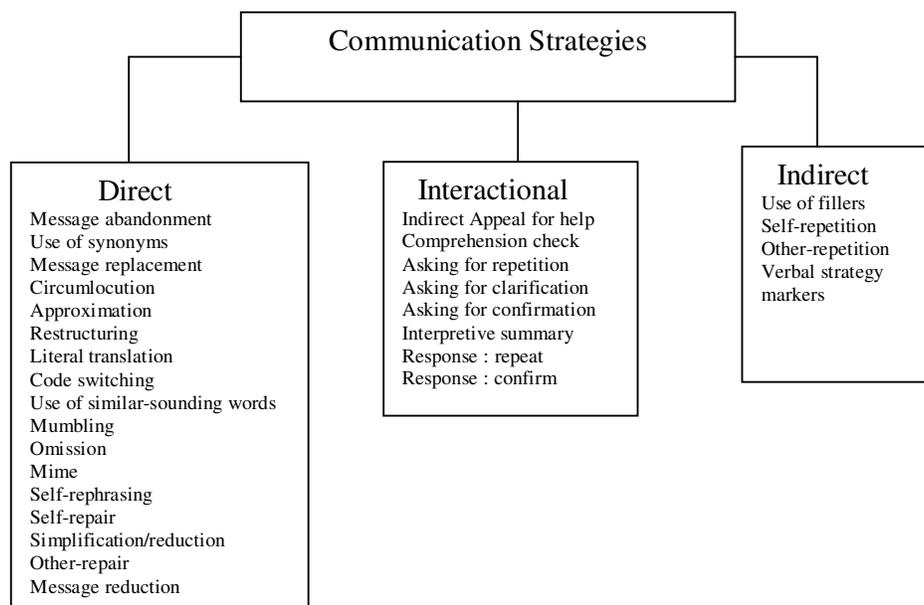

Figure 1. Conceptual framework: A typology of oral communication strategies.

The model is drawn from Dornyei and Scott's (1997) communication strategies classified as direct, interactional, and indirect . They contend that *direct strategies* provide an alternative, manageable, and self-contained (sometimes modified) means of getting the meaning across. For the *indirect strategies*, these are devices which facilitate the conveyance of meaning indirectly by creating the conditions for

achieving mutual understanding: preventing breakdowns and keeping the communication channel open (e.g.,use of fillers) or indicating less than perfect forms that require extra effort to understand (using strategy markers or hedges). *Interactional strategies* are used when participants carry out trouble-shooting exchanges cooperatively (e.g., appeal for and grant help or request for and provide clarification), and therefore

mutual understanding is a function of the successful execution of both their parts of the exchange (pp.198-199).

The present researchers believe that Dornyei and Scott's taxonomy is most appropriate for their study. Based on their pilot study, they identified two other strategies- use of synonyms and simplification /reduction ; hence, a little modification of Dornyei and Scott's taxonomy was done.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study sought to investigate the oral communication strategies used by 48 Taiwanese students (24 pairs) of Shu Zen College of Medicine and Management from the Department of Applied Foreign Languages. More particularly, it identified the oral communication strategies of first year and fourth year students when talking with their classmates in English. In addition, it described how different these communication strategies were; and finally, it attempted to find out the relationship between the choice of oral communication strategies and the year level of the students. The independent variable is the year level of the students or their formal training in the English subject, where fourth year students have four years of exposure while the first year students have barely a year of exposure to the subject. This affects the choice of communication strategies (intervening variable) and their verbal output which is the dependent variable. Thus, the null hypothesis tested in this study is "There is no relationship between the choice of oral communication strategies and the year level of the students."

METHODOLOGY

A *pilot study* was conducted using the list of communication strategies prepared by Dornyei and Scott (1997). This list was validated through the use of a questionnaire designed for this purpose. It was pilot tested with four English

teachers— a PH.D. professor, two PH.D. students, and a Drama and Speech major. Two short conversations and one long conversation performed by three pairs of students were sampled for their use. VCDs and transcripts of these three conversations were also provided. The experts were asked not to limit themselves to the strategies in the questionnaire but to include others which they have come across as they analyzed the conversations in the VCDs. The findings of the pilot study resulted in a revised list of strategies as shown in the typology.

The *study proper* involved forty-eight Taiwanese students or a total of 24 paired conversations. They were enrolled as English majors at the Department of Applied Foreign Languages of Shu Zen College of Medicine and Management (SZMC). Since the fourth-year students belonged to a class of twenty-five, and the first year students to a class of forty-five, the researchers got twelve conversation pairs from each group. Random sampling was used among the freshman students.

The senior students studied English for three years at SZMC and were on their seventh semester in college. Three of them had been exchange students to Canada and one a high school graduate of Singapore. The freshman students were just starting with their first semester of college work at SZMC.

Both groups of students were asked to share information to any of their friends in class through make-believe telephone conversations. They were asked to talk within three minutes on their favorite topic— personal experiences or any news that they wanted to share with their partners. They were given five minutes to prepare for their conversation. It was surprising to find out that during their planning session, they wrote their conversations and practiced them. They were prohibited, however, from reading their conversational plans during the actual video recording. Such conversation plans were collected by the researchers before they talked. After all, the researchers decided that there was a need for them to interview the participants

should they find the conversations incomprehensible. Thus, the conversation plans were thought to be useful to the researchers.. As Ericson and Simon (1984 in Bou-Franch, 1994) said, it is also necessary for the learners to take part in a retrospective session with the researcher to identify communication strategies properly. In fact, the researchers interviewed two pairs from each year level because their conversational plans were altered during their actual conversations and some of their utterances were inaudible.

The researchers identified the communication strategies using the validated instrument. A frequency count was done in all the strategies employed by both first- year and fourth- year students. Differences in the communication strategies employed by both groups were analyzed. The chi square test of significance was used to determine if there was a relationship between the communication strategies employed and their length of exposure to formal English instruction or their year level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The oral communication strategies employed by the students were classified into three: direct, interactional, and indirect. As defined by Dornyei and Scott (1997), *communication strategies* provide an alternative, manageable, and self-

contained means of getting the meaning across. *Direct strategies* facilitate the conveyance of meaning indirectly by creating the conditions for achieving mutual understanding: preventing breakdowns and keeping the communication channel open. *Interactional strategies* are used when participants carry out trouble-shooting exchanges cooperatively. In relation to these types of communication strategies, the first problem in the study has been addressed:

1. What oral communication strategies do students employ when talking with their classmates in English?

In this study, seventeen direct strategies were identified. These are message abandonment, use of synonyms, message replacement, circumlocution, approximation ,restructuring, literal translation, code switching, use of similar -sounding words, mumbling, omission, mime, self-rephrasing, self-repair, simplification/reduction, other-repair, message reduction. Interactional strategies include indirect appeal for help, comprehension check, asking for repetition, asking for clarification, asking for confirmation, interpretive summary, response: repair, and response : confirm. Indirect strategies include use of fillers, self-repetition, other-repetition, and verbal strategy markers. Descriptions and examples of these strategies are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.*Oral Communication Strategies Evident in the Conversations*

Strategies and Descriptions	Examples
Direct Strategies 1. Message abandonment A message is left unfinished because of language difficulty.	*Oh…I like….I like....*(mime, laughter) (4F1-P8)

2. Message reduction (topic avoidance)
The message is reduced by avoiding certain language structures or topics considered problematic language wise or by leaving out some intended elements for lack of linguistic resources.

I*: So… Did you go to China Town?*
S*: No. I never been there.*
  O.K…I have thing to do.
  We talk next time. (4F1-P4)

3. Message replacement
The original message is substituted with a new one because the speaker is not capable of executing it.

I: *That's no things…..*(mumbles for 'That's not true')
S: *O.K. What else do you want to share with me?*
I: *Do you want to pick up a girl to go with me?*
  (4F1-P1)

4. Circumlocution / Paraphrase
The properties of the target object or action are exemplified or described.

Recycling is using again and again because trash is not easy to decompose.(1F1-P6)

5. Approximation
A single alternative lexical item, such as a superordinate or a related term, sharing semantic features with the target word or structure, is used.

Play tennis just my entertainment.(4F1-P3)

6. Restructuring
The execution of a verbal plan, because of language difficulties, is abandoned, leaving the utterance unfinished, and communicating the intended message according to an alternative plan.

I don't have any choice…I don't have lover. Speaker has no choice but to stay home. (1F1-P4)

7. Literal translation
A lexical item, an idiom, or a compound word or structure from L1/L3 to L2 is translated literally.

I very interested the news.(Wo hen shi- huan tsa tza shin- wen.) (4F1-P2)

8. Code switching
(language switch)
Words in the native language are used instead of the target language.

1.收訊不良 喂(Sho shin bu liang. Wei? Wei?)
  Hello….Hello? (laughter)

9. Use of similar-sounding words
A lexical item, whose form the speaker is unsure of, is used; it sounds more or less like the target item.

I jump up have a idea. instead of 'I just have an idea.' (1F1-P2)

10. Mumbling
A word (or part of a word), whose correct form the speaker is uncertain about, is muttered inaudibly or swallowed.

I don't have any choice…(Speaker says something that can't be understood.)

11. Omission
A gap is left when the speaker does not know a word and later carries on as if it had been said.

What kind of …do you like? (1F1-P12)

12. Self-repair
Self-initiated corrections are done by the speaker in his/her own speech.

He takes of me takes care of me very well.(4F1-P7)

13. Self-rephrasing
A term is repeated, though not very similar to it, by adding something or using paraphrase.

She's very cute…big eyes and small mouth.
  (4F1-P2)

14.Mime(nonlinguistic/paralinguistic strategies)
Concepts are described nonverbally, or a verbal strategy is accompanied with a visual illustration.

Not good… (Mimes for being tired). *I usually busy every day.*

15.Use of synonyms
A word or words that have the same meaning as the target word is used.

I got many money during Chinese New Year.
  (1F1-P1)

16. Simplification/Reduction
 Deletions are resorted to in order to reduce
 a structurally complex item but in so doing, erroneous phrases or sentences are committed.

I'm gonna with my friends for 'I'm going out with my friends.' (1F1-P5)

17. Other-repair
Something is corrected in the interlocutor's speech.

I*: See…(looks at S for help)*
S*: See you later.*
I*: O.K. See you later. Bye!*

 Interactional Strategies
18. Indirect appeal for help
Help from the interlocutor is elicited indirectly by expressing lack of a needed L2 item either verbally or nonverbally.

So…(Speaker pauses and looks at interlocutor to ask for help) (4F1-P8)

19. Comprehension check
Questions are asked by the speaker to check whether the interlocutor can follow him/her.

Do you know now that recycling is a good way to protect the earth?(1F1-P6

20. Asking for repetition
 Repetition is requested when something is not heard or understood.

 What? What? (4F1-P8)

21. Asking for clarification
Explanation is requested of an unfamiliar meaning or structure.

Is baby a boy or a girl? (4F1-P2)

23. Interpretive summary
A paraphrase of the interlocutor's utterance is extended to check that the speaker has understood the message correctly.

So you have an experience already and you already know how to serve customers, right? (4F1-P6)

24.Response : repair
Other – initiated self-repair is provided.

S*: Because Danby is my …is my…*
I*: Near your place?*
S*: Because Danby is my …is my… near my home.*

25. Response :confirm
What the interlocutor has said or suggested is confirmed by the speaker.

S: I know. You make money in a fashion shop, right?
I*:Yes.* (4F1-P8)

Indirect Strategies

26.Use of fillers
Gambits are used to fill pauses, to stall, and to gain time in order to keep the communication going and to maintain the conversation even when the speaker experiences difficulty.

Okay…umm…umm… next time. (4F1-P8)

27.Self-repetition
A word or a string of words is repeated immediately after it has been said.

Ok.You help…you help me buy drinks.

28. Use of verbal strategy markers
Verbal marking phrases are used before or after a strategy to signal that the word or structure does not carry the intended meaning perfectly in the L2 code.

And I played …something…er...explore computer piano… (1F1-P10)

29. Other-repetition
Speaker repeats something which the interlocutor said to gain time.

I*: Do you have plan for your Chinese New Year?*
S*: My Chinese New Year?* (1F1-P8)

FIRST- YEAR STUDENTS

Direct Oral CS
    The first- year students frequently used simplification/reduction in their conversations followed by literal translation, mime, mumbling, and code switching. The least used were approximation, self-rephrasing, and other-repair (used only once) while the most used were simplification/reduction (26), literal translation (21) and mime (11).

    Their sentences revealed that they were simplified. They resorted to deletions to reduce a structurally complex item. Their native language, which may be Chinese Mandarin or Taiwanese, affected their use of English, the target language. Nonlinguistic strategies were used by them when they could not think of the proper words to describe what they wanted to say. They used their native language to keep their conversation going.

Interactional Oral Communication Strategies

The most used interactional oral communication strategies of the students were asking for clarification (9) and indirect appeal for help (5). The students frequently asked their partners questions for clarification. They requested for an explanation of a word or an utterance that was not clear to them. The least that they did was to check the comprehension of their partners about their topic (1).

Indirect Oral Communication Strategies

It was revealed that the most used indirect strategy by freshman students was the use of fillers (47). The speaker and interlocutor made several pauses or used the words *O.K. oh,* or *ummm* to gain time, so that they could continue with their conversation. They used self-repetition (8) and other-repetition (9) often. They either repeated the words or phrases that they have just uttered or those which their partners have just mentioned. Use of verbal strategy markers was least used (1).

FOURTH – YEAR STUDENTS

Direct Oral Communication Strategies

Simplification/reduction (24) had the most number of frequencies used by fourth-year students. This was followed by literal translation (23), self-repair (13), mime (10), and circumlocution (9). The least were restructuring and message reduction which were only used once.

The students simplified their sentences by leaving out a word or words which made their sentences grammatically incorrect. Due to the interference of their native language, they used literal translation. They tried their best to correct themselves whenever they or mime when they could not think of the right expression or used circumlocution by giving a roundabout expression instead of stating directly what they meant.

Interactional Oral Communication Strategies

The fourth-year students used asking

for clarification (43) and asking for confirmation (19) most frequently while interpretive summary and response: repair were used once. They often requested for an explanation of an unfamiliar term. Moreover, they wanted to know whether what they heard or understood was correct or not.

Indirect Oral Communication Strategies

A great number of fillers (90) was used by the students while verbal strategy markers was rarely used (2). In addition, they used self-repetition (9) and other-repetition(6). The former is used when the speaker repeats some of his words or phrases while the latter is done when the speaker repeats a word or phrase given by the interlocutor.

The second and third problems of the study have been addressed as shown below:
2. How different are the communication strategies employed by first-year and fourth-year students?
3. Is there a relationship between the choice of oral communication strategies and the year level / length of exposure of the students to formal training in English?

Both freshman and senior students used almost the same communication strategies ranked according to frequency as shown in Table 2. The freshman students used simplification reduction, literal translation, mime, mumbling, and code switching with almost the same frequencies as the senior students. The seniors, however, used self-repair, next to literal translation. This reveals that the seniors are more conscious of their grammar compared to the freshman students who rarely used self-repair. Senior students also used circumlocution instead of giving up their conversation compared to the freshman students who never used this strategy. As shown in the transcribed utterances of the freshman students, their conversations were generally short, almost half of the conversations given by their senior

counterparts.. This shows their inability to manipulate the English language; hence, they did not use circumlocution.

Table 2. *Frequency of Direct Oral Communication Strategies Used by 1F1 and 4F1 Students*

Communication Strategies	Class		Total
	4F1	1F1	
Message abandonment	6	3	9
Use of synonyms	0	2	2
Message replacement	3	0	3
Circumlocution	9	0	9
Approximation	4	1	5
Restructuring	1	2	3
Literal translation	23	21	44
Code switching	5	6	11
Use of similar- sounding words	4	4	8
Mumbling	6	8	14
Omission	4	2	6
Mime	10	11	21
Self-rephrasing	2	1	3
Self-repair	13	3	16
Simplification/reduction	24	26	50
Other-repair	2	1	3
Message reduction	1	0	1
Total	117	91	208

Using the chi-square test of significance, Table 3 shows that there is no significant relationship between the direct oral communication strategies and the year level of the students. Both groups employed the same or almost the same communication strategies.

Table 3. *Chi-Square Tests for Direct Oral Communication Strategies Used by 4F1 and 1F1 Students*

	Value	*df*	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.428(a)	16	.103
Likelihood Ratio	29.516	16	.021
Linear-by-Linear Association	.989	1	.320
N of Valid Cases	208		

The frequency of occurrence of the interactional oral communication strategies shown in Table 4 proves that the 4F1 students were more articulate in the target language than the 1F1 students. The former asked for simplification and confirmation five times more than the latter.

The mere fact that the seniors used seven strategies with a frequency of 82 while 1F1 used only 4 strategies with a frequency of 19 reveals that the seniors

had more linguistic sources than their freshman counterpart. In addition, three of these senior students were sent to Canada as cultural exchange students.

Their exposure and experience might have helped them a lot. Thus, they were able to elicit questions from their partners to maintain their conversations.

Table 4 . *Frequency of Interactional Oral Communication Strategies Used by 4F1 and 1F1 Students*

Communication Strategies	Class		Total
	4F1	1F1	
Indirect appeal for help	4	5	9
Comprehension check	0	2	2
Asking for repetition	4	0	4
Asking for clarification	43	9	52
Asking for confirmation	19	3	22
Interpretive summary	1	0	1
Response: repair	1	0	1
Response: confirm	10	0	10
Total	82	19	101

Table 5 shows that there is a significant relationship between the choice of interactional communication strategies and the year level of the students. The more the students are exposed to formal training in English, the more communication strategies they use. In this case, the senior students were able to employ more strategies than the freshman students.

Table 5 . *Chi-Square Tests for Interactional Oral Communication Strategies Used by 4F1 and 1F1 Students*

	Value	*df*	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.758(a)	7	.004
Likelihood Ratio	19.857	7	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.312	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	101		

In Table 6, the order of occurrence of indirect oral communication strategies is the same among 1F1 and 4F1 students with the use of fillers as the highest and the use of verbal strategy markers as the lowest. However, 4F1 students used fillers twice as much as the 1F1 students (90 against 47). This is due to the reason that even if they found difficulty in pushing through with their conversations, they did not want to give up right away and in so doing, they resorted to the use of fillers and pauses while thinking of the right word that they wanted to say. It is evident that 1F1 students readily gave up when they found difficulty in a language item by ending their conversation right away unlike the 4F1 students. fillers and pauses while thinking of the right word that they wanted to say. It is evident that 1F1 students readily gave up when they found difficulty in a language item by ending their conversation right away unlike the 4F1 students.

Table 6. *Frequency of Indirect Oral Communication Strategies*

Communication Strategies	Class		Total
	4F1	1F1	
Use of fillers	90	47	137
Self-repetition	9	8	17
Verbal strategy markers	2	1	3
Other-repetition	6	9	15
Total	107	65	172

An examination of the chi-square tests in Table 7 shows that there is no significant difference in the use of indirect oral communication strategies between 1F1 and 4F1 ($p = .212$). It is only in the use of fillers that there exists a great gap. Thus, there is no significant relationship between the choice of indirect oral communication strategies and the year level of the students.

Table 7. *Chi-Square Tests for Indirect Oral Communication Strategies*

	Value	*df*	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.501(a)	3	.212
Likelihood Ratio	4.370	3	.224
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.940	1	.047
N of Valid Cases	172		

Finally, when the overall frequency of oral communication strategies were investigated, as shown in Table 8, there was an overwhelming difference between the two year levels. The senior students had more direct, interactional, and indirect strategies than the freshman students.

Table 8. *Overall Frequency of Oral Communication Strategies Used by 4F1 and 1F1 Students*

Communication Strategies	Class		Total
	4F1	1F1	
I Direct	117	91	208
Interactional	82	19	101
Inderect	107	65	172
Total	306	175	481

As shown in Table 9, fillers (29.41%), asking for clarification (14.05%) , simplification / reduction(7.84%), and literal translation (6.21%), were most frequently used by 4F1 students. Likewise, fillers (26.9%), simplification / reduction (14.9%), and literal translation (12%) were mostly used by 1F1 students. An overall frequency of these strategies, 1F1 and 4F1 combined, reveals that fillers (28.48%), asking for clarification (10.81%), simplification / reduction (10.40%), and literal translation (9.15%) were most used by these students.

Table 9. Overall Frequency of Oral Communication Strategies Used by 1F1 and 4F1 Students

1F1			4F1			1F1+4F1		
Ca	47	26.9%	Ca	90	29.41%	Ca	137	28.48%
Ap	26	14.9%	Bd	43	14.05%	Bd	52	10.81%
Ag	21	12.0%	Ap	24	7.84%	Ap	50	10.40%
Al	11	6.3%	Ag	23	7.52%	Ag	44	9.15%
Bd	9	5.1%	Be	19	6.21%	Be	22	4.57%
Cd	9	5.1%	An	13	4.25%	Al	21	4.37%
Aj	8	4.6%	Al	10	3.27%	Cb	17	3.53%
Cb	8	4.6%	Bh	10	3.27%	An	16	3.33%
Ah	6	3.4%	Cb	9	2.94%	Cd	15	3.12%
Ba	5	2.9%	Ad	9	2.94%	Aj	14	2.91%
Ai	4	2.3%	Cd	6	1.96%	Ah	11	2.29%
Aa	3	1.7%	Aj	6	1.96%	Bh	10	2.08%
An	3	1.7%	Aa	6	1.96%	Aa	9	1.87%
Be	3	1.7%	Ah	5	1.63%	Ad	9	1.87%
Ab	2	1.1%	Ba	4	1.31%	Ba	9	1.87%
Af	2	1.1%	Ai	4	1.31%	Ai	8	1.66%
Ak	2	1.1%	Ak	4	1.31%	Ak	6	1.25%
Bb	2	1.1%	Ae	4	1.31%	Ae	5	1.04%
Ae	1	0.6%	Bc	4	1.31%	Bc	4	0.83%
Am	1	0.6%	Ac	3	0.98%	Ac	3	0.62%
Aq	1	0.6%	Am	2	0.65%	Af	3	0.62%
Cc	1	0.6%	Aq	2	0.65%	Am	3	0.62%
Ac	0	0.0%	Cc	2	0.65%	Aq	3	0.62%
Ad	0	0.0%	Af	1	0.33%	Cc	3	0.62%
Ar	0	0.0%	Ar	1	0.33%	Ab	2	0.42%
Bc	0	0.0%	Bf	1	0.33%	Bb	2	0.42%
Bf	0	0.0%	Bg	1	0.33%	Ar	1	0.21%
Bg	0	0.0%	Ab	0	0.00%	Bf	1	0.21%
Bh	0	0.0%	Bb	0	0.00%	Bg	1	0.21%

Legend:
Af = Restructuring
Aq = Other-repair
Ai = Use of similar- sounding words
Aa = Message abandonment
AL = Mime
Ap= Simplification/reduction
Bf = Interpretive summary
Bc = Asking for repetition
Bd = Asking for clarification
Cc = Verbal strategy markers
Ca = Use of fillers

Ar = Message reduction   *Am* = Self-rephrasing
Ac = Message replacement   *Ae* = Approximation
Ak = Omission   *Ah* = Code switching
Aj = Mumbling   *Ad* = Circumlocution
An = Self-repair   *Ag* = Literal translation

Bg = Response: repair   *Ba* = Indirect appeal for help
Bh = Response: confirm   *Be* = Asking for confirmation

Cd = Other-repetition   *Cb* = Self-repetition

Applying the chi-square test of significance (*chi-square* = 18.497, *df* = 2, *p* = .000), Table 10 reveals that there is a significant relationship between the choice of oral communication strategies and the year level of the students. The longer the students are exposed to formal training in English, the more their

communication strategies are. The 1F1 students had a greater tendency to surrender and end their conversations; therefore, their conversations were short

and their communication strategies, fewer. As to the 4F1 students, they did not easily give up answering with their partner but tried to struggle using fillers, most of all.

Table 10. *Chi-Square Tests for Overall Oral Communication Strategies*

	Value	*df*	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.497(a)	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	19.838	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.902	1	.168
N of Valid Cases	481		

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results of this study show that the SZMC Applied Foreign Language students tried their best to speak using English as their foreign language. Even if they experienced difficulty in speaking, they tried to express their thoughts using different communication strategies – direct, interactional, and indirect. Not all of Dornyei's strategies, however, were evident in the conversations examined which may be due to the limited number of students in the department.

An investigation of the frequency of occurrence of these strategies reveals that a significant relationship existed between the choice of communication strategies of these students and their year level or exposure to formal training in English. This means that the more the students are exposed to English, the more communication strategies they used in order to overcome their difficulties. The English subjects that were taught to them every year were a big help in making them handle difficulties in the English language. Self-repair, self-rephrasing, or simplification / reduction involve the use of grammar which they learn in the classroom. Besides, three senior students had the chance to go to Canada as exchange students which may have trained them to carry on conversations with native speakers. This opportunity was not given to the freshman students.

With the emphasis now on developing learner autonomy among students, examining the communication strategies of students is imperative not just to determine their interlanguage but to find out which strategies would be effective in developing their oral communication skills.

Since communication strategies reflect the interlanguage of the students, a deeper knowledge of these strategies would serve as valuable input in designing materials for improving language teaching methodology.

The following recommendations may be taken into account by English teachers, materials writers, administrators, or researchers:

1. Communication strategies that develop good oral communication skills of the students may be taught in the classroom.
2. More opportunities for English conversation should be given to students inside / outside of the classroom.
3. A bigger sampling may be considered by future researchers to see if other communication strategies not found in the study would be present.
4. The mean length of utterances of the speakers may be investigated to see how it affects their choice of strategies.
5. Materials writers may include activities on communication strategies used by students.

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