

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS

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### Abstract

This paper is aimed at investigating the types of communication strategies employed by male and female students of Electronic engineering study program. Communication strategies are strategies applied by learners to assist them to overcome problems during communication. The subjects of this research are 20 students of second grade Diploma III Electronic engineering study program. The students were given task to do presentation about electronic home appliances. The presentations were recorded and later the communication strategies will be analyzed. This research uses Faerch and Kasper (1983) typology of communication strategies which divide communication strategies into two kinds, namely achievement and reduction strategies. Achievement strategies are employed when learners decide to keep the original communicative goal but compensate for insufficient means or make the effort to retrieve the required item. The sign of reduction strategies is when learners to do away with a problem. The strategies can be seen through the learners giving up part of his/her communicative goal.

*Key words: communication strategies, avoidance, compensatory, male and female students*

### I. INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that is important to be mastered. Moreover, it is used in many field nowadays, such as in education, job world, business, technology and many other. English has been one of courses that is taught in all study programs. Students of State Polytechnic of Malang must master English since graduates of Polytechnic are directed to work. Many companies that do recruitment in State Polytechnic require their candidates to be

able to have a good ability in English, both passive and active. Thus, mastering English becomes a need for students.

Communication skills are perceived as an important ability, since it is through communication people send and receive messages effectively and negotiate meaning (Rubin and Thompson, 1994:30). Nowadays most companies put it as one of their requirements in recruiting employees. Therefore, to communicate effectively in English become main goal for students since it is crucial in applying for jobs. The

skill to communicate orally is needed more than the skills to read and write.

Communication skills have some forms such as the skill to negotiate, give presentation, have conversation, listen attentively, as well as work with others. According to Manktelow (in *understanding communication skills*<sup>1</sup>) there was a survey done to some companies. The result of the survey is communication skills were cited as the single more important decisive factor in choosing manager.

An English course is designed to provide students with practices to improve their speaking skill. The course is English III. This course provides practices that mainly focused on improving speaking ability. Some activities are done during the course such as conversation, presentation, and role play. Through the activities it is found that learners often find difficulties to deliver their messages during the process of communication, mainly oral communication. They have to find ways to overcome the difficulties happen to be able to deliver their messages which are known as communication strategies.

According to Bialystok (1990: 1), "the familiar ease and fluency with which we sail from one idea to the next in our first language is constantly shattered by some gap in our knowledge of a second language". The forms of these gaps can be a word, a structure, a phrase, a tense marker or an idiom. The attempts to overcome these gaps are described as communication strategies.

This paper is aimed at investigating the types of communication strategies employed by male and female students mainly in Electronic Engineering study program of State Polytechnic of Malang. The finding is expected to give some theoretical and practical contribution to the teaching of English especially in State

Polytechnic of Malang. Theoretically the result of this study will give teachers knowledge on the types of communication strategies used by male and female students. Practically the result of this study can be used to improve the English teaching in State Polytechnic of Malang.

The task that is observed is students' presentation on launching an electronic product. 20 students were the objects of this study. This study is a qualitative study since the data taken were in the form of students' utterances and nonverbal gestures.

### **Communication Strategies**

According to Mitchell and Myles (1995:94) communication strategies are tactics used by non-fluent learner during L2 interaction in order to overcome specific communicative problem. While Faerch and Kasper (1983) state that communication strategies are potentially conscious plan for solving what to an individual present itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal. Thus, it can be concluded that communication strategies are learners' ways to overcome what are seen as problems during communication. These ways are deliberately done by learners since Faerch and Kasper (1983) state that it was consciously planned.

There are some researches done in the field of communication strategies that contribute to the understanding of communication strategies. In 1972 Selinker (in Dornyei 1997) coined a term 'communication strategy' in his paper about interlanguage that discussed strategies in second language communication as one of five central processes in L2 learning. Later in 1973 Varadi delivered a speech which was considered as the first systematic analysis of strategic language behavior. However the paper was circulated in 1980. Tarone (1980) and her associates had published

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<sup>1</sup> [www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com)

two primary researches that become the basis of communication strategy definition as well as its taxonomy in 1977. The work of Tarone (1980) is seen to be influential since it is used until today as the basis of most researches in the field of communication strategy. This taxonomy of communication strategy is shown in the following.

**1. Avoidance**

- a. Topic Avoidance
- b. Message abandonment

**2. Paraphrase**

- a. Approximation
- b. Word Coinage
- c. Circumlocution

**3. Conscious Transfer**

- a. Literal Translation
- b. Language Switch

**4. Appeal for Assistance**

**5. Mime**

Tarone (1980) taxonomy divides communication strategies into two primary parts. Topic avoidance occurs when learners simply do not talk about the concepts for which the vocabulary is not known. While message abandonment occurs when learners cannot continue the sentence and start a new sentence. Other strategies such as paraphrase, conscious transfer, appeal for assistance and mime can be categorized as compensatory strategies since learner who employ the strategies do efforts in order to deliver the messages.

Another theory of communication strategies was proposed by Faerch and Kasper (1983). Different from Tarone (1980), Faerch and Kasper (1983) divide communication strategies into reduction strategies and achievement strategies. Faerch and Kasper (1983) provide a more detailed theory of communication strategy. For reduction strategies they include formal and functional reduction strategies.

While for achievement strategies cover compensatory and retrieval strategy.

In addition to the two theories, Dornyei (in Brown 2000: 138) also proposed a theory of communication strategies known as the classification of communication strategies. He divides his theory into two parts they are avoidance and compensatory. In avoidance he explains two strategies they are topic avoidance and message abandonment. Message abandonment means leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties. Topic avoidance is avoiding topic areas or concepts that pose language difficulties.

In compensatory strategies there are eleven types of strategies as follows. Compensatory strategies consist of the following.

1. Circumlocution: describing or exemplifying the target object of action (e.g., the thing you open bottles with for corkscrew).
2. Approximation: using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target lexical item as closely as possible (e.g., ship for sailboat).
3. Use of all-purpose words: extending a general, empty lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking (e.g. the overuse of thing, stuff, what-do-you-call-it, thingie).
4. Word coinage: creating a non-existing L2 word based on a supposed rule (e.g. vegetarianist for vegetarian).
5. Prefabricated pattern: using memorized stock phrases, usually for 'survival' purposes (e.g. Where is the \_\_\_\_\_ or Comment allezvous?, where the morphological

components are not known to the learner).

6. Nonlinguistic signals: mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation.
7. Literal translation: translating literally a lexical item, idiom, compound word or structure word from L1 to L2.
8. Foreignizing: using a L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonology (i.e. with a L2 pronunciation) and/or morphology (e.g. adding it to a L2 suffix).
9. Code-switching: using a L1 word with L1 pronunciation or a L3 word with L3 pronunciation while speaking in L2.
10. Appeal for help: asking for aid from the interlocutor either directly (e.g. what do you call...?) or indirectly (e.g. rising intonation, pause, eye contact, puzzled expression).
11. Stalling or time-gaining strategies: using fillers or hesitation devices to fill pauses and to gain time to think (e.g. well, now let's see. Uh as a matter of fact).

Dornyei's (1997) classifications of communication strategies provide a good basis to classify communication strategies. It presents a clear explanation of each strategy as well as a clear division of avoidance and compensatory. Therefore, this study employs the theory to identify the types of communication strategies employed by male and female students.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative method. There are 20 students used as participants. The participants consist of 3 female students and 17 male students. All of them

come from Java which means they have the same L1 background. The students had presentation task about electronic products. Their presentations were recorded using video then their presentations were transcribed. The results of transcription were then classified based on the classification of communication strategy proposed by Dornyei.

## FINDINGS

### Communication Strategies of Male Students

This part discusses the types of communication strategies employed by male students. The first type of communication strategy employed by male students is avoidance strategy which consists of topic avoidance and message abandonment. Topic avoidance seems to be the most strategy employed by male students. This strategy can be seen from the avoidance of some grammar rules.

For example they did not use *is, am, are*. In addition, they did not use the correct verb for example after using modal auxiliaries and in passive voice. The following are some examples of the use of strategies:

1. *ok everybody, good afternoon. / from/from Elgant company e will launching our product,*
2. *we are from Marco corporation, we will presentation my product. My product is five v.*
3. *This robot five v can be save the line in ee//labyrinth. You know a labyrinth? This robot can be to miss a labyrinth*
4. *are you remember our motto?*
5. *Why the name is Superia Suplay because this phone is have the best feature than over all.*

In addition, male students also employ message abandonment strategy. In this strategy students leave their messages without trying to finish it and change to another topic.

Male students also employ compensatory strategies during their presentation. Some of strategies are; approximation, word coinage and use of all-purpose words, code switching, literal translation, appeal for help and on linguistic signals. Male students use approximation to deliver their message. The use of this strategy can be seen from the use of another word that has the closest meaning to the word they refer to. For examples are as follows.

6. *The battery can live until two days*
7. The warranty *not applicable* if seal is broken

In example 6, student explains about how long the battery can last. Instead of using the word 'last' he uses the word 'live' to refer to 'last'. While in example 7, student uses phrase 'not applicable' to refer to 'not valid'.

Besides, some male students also employ word coinage strategy. This strategy occurs when a speaker makes his/her own word that is not in the dictionary. This effort is done to deliver his/her message to the listener. The following is the example of word coinage.

8. soee/we connect some device to television for example computer, mobile phones, camera, usb memory and tablet PC *with wirelessly*

The word 'wirelessly' is made by the speaker to refer to 'by using no wire'.

In addition, male students also employ all-purpose words in facing communication difficulty. An all-purpose word is a strategy in which a speaker uses all words he knows to finish delivering his messages to the listener. Another communication strategy employs by male students is code switching. This strategy happens when students use both L1 and L2 in the same time to help him deliver the message.

Literal translation is also found in male students. This strategy occur when a student speaks using L2 but using the structure of L1 as the basis. The following is the example.

9. You say to our customer service *this product is not can do like usual*

Two other strategies employ by male students are appeal for help and nonlinguistic signals. Male students ask for help when they find difficulties during the communication. They mostly ask help from their friends.

In addition, they also use gestures to help them explain a word. For example, when a male student tries to explain the word 'obstruct', he uses his hands to describe that something obstructs the remote control as in the following example.

10. So *if you/you want to do select e some e select some object, you can/can be control the object although it ( moving hands like something obstructs) although disturb in front of remote*

### Communication Strategies of Female Students

This part discusses the communication strategies employed by female students. The first strategy category that is employed by female students is avoidance strategies.

The strategy is shown in the following examples.

11. *I can to present* for the function of remote control
12. *you can/you can using* this TV ee like PC and handphone
13. *in this opportunity we ee introduce our product and we hope you interest with our product.*
14. *she often play* her radio loud while I study
15. *we will the answer your question.* What is demoon clock? So demoon clock many to use 32 LED, so demoon clock have

Female students employ avoidance strategy by avoid using *be* and making mistakes in selecting the correct verb like in example 11, 12, 14 and 15. In example 13, she doesn't use 'be' to complete the adjective 'interest' in her utterance. While in other examples, female students make mistakes in using verbs. In utterances 11, 12 and 15, they use modal auxiliaries which is followed by *to* infinitive, progressive verb and noun. According to English grammar modal auxiliaries must be followed by the basic form of verb.

Besides avoidance strategy, female students employ compensatory strategies like approximation, word coinage, use-of-all-purpose-words, code switching, literal translation and appeal for help. The result of analysis shows that the most frequent compensatory strategies used by female students are code switching and literal translation. The following are the examples of code switching.

16. *The type is smart TV, tivi yang pintar*
17. *If demoon clock limited source, demoon clock will give we/give you a warning/warning is like ee kelip*

*kelip gitu* (laughing) like as *kelap-kelip*.

Female students use code switching strategy in their utterances, this could show their lack of vocabularies in English. However, they still do effort to deliver messages. Most strategies employ by female students are compensatory strategy. While, there is no message abandonment strategy found in utterances of female students.

In addition to code switching, female students employ literal translation strategy. It is shown in the following examples;

18. *This slide is ee personal ee in a give statement, ee that they love demoon clock.*
19. *Buy/you buy and for seven days happen trouble/you ee return/ee to our company.*

In utterance 18, she wants to say that 'slide ini merupakan pernyataan pribadi bahwa mereka menyukai demon clock'. Student uses English to deliver message, but she uses the structure of *Bahasa Indonesia* in her utterance. While in example 19 'happen trouble' is based on *Bahasa Indonesia* 'terjadi masalah'. Student translates every word from *Bahasa* into English.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis showed previously, it can be concluded that both male and female students employ avoidance and compensatory strategies. The communication strategy used by male students are 1) topic avoidance, 2) message abandonment 3) word coinage, 4) use of all-purpose words, 5) code switching, 6) literal translation, 7) appeal for help, and 8) non-linguistic signal. While female students

employed the following communication strategies; 1) topic avoidance, 2) approximation, 3) word coinage, 4) use of all purpose-words, 5) code switching, 6) literal translation and 7) appeal for help.

The result shows that female students did not employ non-linguistic signals and message abandonment. On the other hand, male students employ both strategies. In employing topic avoidance strategy, both male and female students avoid using the correct form of verb, be (is, am, are) as well as auxiliary verbs like do and does.

Thus it can be said that there is a little difference in the use of communication strategy employed by male and female students. The factors influence the selection of strategies probably caused by other factors instead of gender.

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