THE USE OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN DIFFERENT SPEAKING TASKS BY THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY OF AGRICUTURE AND FORESTRY

Vu Kieu Hanh
TNU - University of Agriculture and Forestry

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the use of communication strategies by the first-year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry (TUAF) while performing one-way and two-way speaking tasks. The participants were 30 first year students, major in Forestry. They were randomly selected by using the convenience sampling method. Data were collected by the observation form and transcribed data of two different tasks: a picture description task (a one-way task) and a role-play task (a two-way task). The frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation (SD), and Chi-square were employed to analyze the data. The results showed that the students used all 5 main types of communication strategies which included avoidance strategy, target language-based strategy, L1-based strategy, modification devices, and nonlinguistic strategy. The most frequently used type of communication strategies was modification devices and the least used type of communication strategies was avoidance strategy. The findings also showed that the students used various types of communication strategies while performing two different tasks.

Keywords: *Communication; strategies; speaking; first-year students; task.*

SỬ DỤNG CÁC CHIẾN LƯỢC GIAO TIẾP TRONG HOẠT ĐỘNG NÓI CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ NHẤT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC NÔNG LÂM – ĐẠI HỌC THÁI NGUYÊN

Vũ Kiều Hạnh
Trường Đại học Nông Lâm – ĐH Thái Nguyên

TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích khảo sát các chiến lược giao tiếp được sinh viên năm thứ nhất sử dụng khi thực hiện các hoạt động nói khác nhau: hoạt động một chiều và hai chiều. Đối tượng tham gia là 30 sinh viên năm thứ nhất tại Trường Đại học Nông Lâm – ĐH Thái Nguyên và được lựa chọn ngẫu nhiên bằng phương pháp lấy mẫu thuận tiện. Dữ liệu được thu thập thông qua biểu mẫu quan sát và dữ liệu được ghi chép từ hai loại hoạt động khác nhau: hoạt động mô tả hình ảnh (hoạt động một chiều) và hoạt động đóng vai (hoạt động hai chiều). Tần suất, tỷ lệ phần trăm, giá trị trung bình, độ lệch chuẩn (SD) và chi bình phương được sử dụng để phân tích dữ liệu. Kết quả cho thấy các sinh viên đã sử dụng tất cả 5 loại chiến lược giao tiếp chính, bao gồm chiến lược né tránh, chiến lược dựa trên ngôn ngữ mục tiêu, chiến lược dựa trên ngôn ngữ thứ nhất, chiến lược sử dụng phương tiện cải biên và chiến lược phi ngôn ngữ. Chiến lược sử dụng phương tiện cải biên được sử dụng thường xuyên nhất và chiến lược né tránh được sử dụng ít nhất. Các kết quả nghiên cứu cũng cho thấy sinh viên sử dụng nhiều chiến lược giao tiếp khác nhau khi thực hiện hai hoạt động nói khác nhau.

Từ khóa: *Giao tiếp; chiến lược; kĩ năng nói; sinh viên năm thứ nhất; hoạt động.*

1. Introduction

Success in communication is essential for people who want to communicate with other in different countries. In order to communicate successfully, communication strategies are important tools because they are the ways or techniques used to communicate and solve communication problems. Many researchers believe that communication strategies can be used to solve communication problems and enhance interaction in the target language [1], [2]. For more than 30 years, a considerable number of studies have been conducted to investigate the use of communication strategies among second and foreign language learners of English. It is, therefore, crucial to investigate the use of communication strategies in order to obtain rich insights into the complex process of language acquisition and help learners develop their communication skills. A review of available literature has shown that a small amount of research has been conducted with language learners learning English as a foreign language (EFL). This study aimed to investigate types of communication strategies employed by the students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry in order to raise learners' and teachers' awareness of using these strategies. The findings of this study can be used as guidelines for teachers of English to teach appropriate communication strategies to help learners solve their communication problems

2. Research Questions

The study was designed to answer the following two research questions:

1. What types of communication strategies are employed by the students while doing speaking tasks?

2. Do the students use different types of communication strategies in one-way and two-way tasks?

3. Literature Review

3.1. Communication Strategies

The term "communication strategies" (CSs) has been used within the second language (L2) context since the early 1970s. Dörnyei [3] is credited for being the first to use this term to explain certain types of errors made by L2 learners. However, Færch & Kasper [4] were the first to recognize learners' problem-solving behavior during teaching language as "communication strategy." They stated that learners tend to use CSs to compensate for their lack of appropriate target language knowledge when expressing or decoding the meaning of their intended utterances. With a psycholinguistic framework, Færch and Kasper defined communication strategies as "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communication goal" [5, p.81].

Therefore, in the most general sense communication strategies is a plan of action to accomplish a communication goal and the enhancement of communication. CSs are the strategies that are used when communication problems occur. Although there are various quoted definitions of CSs, "there is no universally accepted definition of CSs" [6]. Researchers in the field seem to agree on the fact that CSs are resorted to when learners' linguistic means are not enough to convey their intended meaning.

3.2. Classification of Communication Strategies

Different types of CSs have been classified by many researchers in the field. Selinker [7] classified CSs into three main types including borrowing, paraphrase and avoidance. Tarone, Cohen & Dumas [8] classified CSs into two main types: reduction strategies and achievement strategies. In addition, Wannaruk [9] classified CSs into five types: L1-based strategies, L2-based strategies,

nonlinguistic strategies, analysis-based strategies, and control-based strategies. Besides, Weerarak [10] proposed three main types of CSs: avoidance or reduction strategies, achievement or compensatory strategies, and time-gaining strategies. Since the classification of CSs has been continuously developed, many different typologies of CSs have merged. In this study, the researcher adopted Willems [11] classification of CSs and divided the CSs into five main types that are avoidance strategy (topic avoidance and message avoidance), target language-based strategy (approximation, circumlocution and direct asking), L1-based strategy (language switching and foreignizing), modification devices (comprehension check, clarification request, overlap, back channel, self-repair, confirmation check and pausing) and nonlinguistic strategy (gesture and mime).

The types of CSs used as a framework of this study are shown in Table1.

Table 1. *Types of CSs used in the study*

Avoidance strategy	1. Topic avoidance 2. Message avoidance
Target Language-based	3. Approximation 4. Circumlocution 5. Direct asking
L1-based strategy	6. Language switching 7. Foreignizing
Modification devices	8. Comprehension check 9. Clarification request 10. Overlap 11. Back channel 12. Self-repair 13. Confirmation 14. Pausing
Nonlinguistic strategy	15. Gesture 16. Mime

4. Methodology

A convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants for this study. The participants consisted of 30 first year students at TUAF. At the time of data collection, all of them enrolled in two English courses: Basic Oral Skill and Conversation courses. In those two courses, they learn how to communicate in different situations in real-life circumstances with English native speakers.

The instruments used to collect data in this study were the observation form and transcribed data of two different tasks: a picture description task (one-way task) and a role-play task (two-way task). The observation form was modified from Bialystok [1] based on the theoretical frameworks proposed by Chen [2] and Dörnyei [3].

For the purpose of this study, the participants were asked to perform the two different speaking tasks. The researcher used the observation form to check the types of CSs used by the students while performing the two different tasks. Then, the frequency and percentage of students' use of CSs checked in the observation form were analyzed. To check for reliability, the researcher and one expert independently checked the types of CSs used by the students. The level of agreement in checking the types of CSs in the observation form was then computed in order to check for reliability. To check the data collected from the observation form, the video and audio recordings of the students' task performance were transcribed. Then the researcher and the same expert independently coded all transcribed data from the two different tasks. After that, the frequency and percentage of students' use of CSs coded from the transcribed data were analyzed.

5. Findings

Table 2. *Types of CSs used by the students in the picture description or one-way task*

Types of Communication Strategies	Observation form		Transcription Data	
	frequency	*%*	*frequency*	*%*
Avoidance strategy	**3**	**0.84**	**3**	**0.82**
1. Topic avoidance	0	0	0	0
2. Message avoidance	3	0.84	3	0.82
Target Language-based strategy	**9**	**2.52**	**9**	**2.45**
3. Approximation	5	1.40	5	1.36
4. Circumlocution	4	1.12	4	1.09
5. Direct asking	0	0	0	0
L1-based strategy	**5**	**1.40**	**5**	**1.36**
6. Language switching	5	1.40	5	1.36
7. Foreignizing	0	0	0	0
Modification devices	**309**	**86.55**	**318**	**86.41**
8. Comprehension check	0	0	0	0
9. Clarification request	0	0	0	0
10. Overlap	0	0	0	0
11. Back channel	0	0	0	0
12. Self-repair	60	16.80	63	17.12
13. Confirmation	0	0	0	0
14. Pausing	249	69.75	255	19.29
Nonlinguistic strategy	**31**	**8.68**	**33**	**8.97**
15. Gesture	31	8.68	33	8.97
16. Mime	0	0	0	0
Total	**357**	**100**	**368**	**100**

As shown in Table 2, 7 subtypes of CSs were checked in the observation form while the students performed the picture description or one-way task. Pausing (249, 69.75%) was mostly observed in the picture description task (one-way task), followed by self-repair (60, 16.80%), gesture (31, 8.68%), approximation (5, 1.40%), language switching (5, 1.40%), and circumlocution (4, 1.12%). The least frequently used strategy was message avoidance (3, 0.84%). For the five main types of CSs, the findings showed that modification devices was mostly used by the students (309, 86.55%), followed by nonlinguistic strategy (31, 8.68%), target language based strategy (9, 2.52%) and L1-based strategy (5, 1.40%). Avoidance strategy was the least frequently used strategy (3, 0.84%).

In terms of the transcribed data, the findings showed that the most frequently used strategy was pausing (255, 69.29%), followed by self-repair (63, 17.12%), gesture (33, 8.97%), approximation (5, 1.36%), language switching (5, 1.36%), and circumlocution (4, 1.09%). The least frequently used strategy was message avoidance (3, 0.82%). For the five main types of CSs, the findings showed that modification devices were mostly used by the students (318, 86.41%), followed by nonlinguistic strategy (33, 8.97%), target language-based strategy (9, 2.45%) and L1-based strategy (5, 1.36%). Avoidance strategy was the least frequently used strategy (3, 0.82%).

In order to elicit the students' use of CSs in the role-play or two-way task, the students were asked to play in the simulated business situation. The researcher and one expert independently checked the types of CSs used by the students in the observation form and the transcribed data. The frequency of the students' use of CSs in the observation form and the transcribed data was counted.

Table 3. *Types of CSs used by the students in the role-play or two-way task*

Types of Communication Strategies	Observation form		Transcription Data	
	frequency	*%*	*frequency*	*%*
Avoidance strategy	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
1. Topic avoidance	0	0	0	0
2. Message avoidance	0	0	0	0
Target Language-based strategy	**2**	**0.46**	**2**	**0.45**
3. Approximation	**2**	**0.46**	**2**	**0.45**
4. Circumlocution	0	0	0	0
5. Direct asking	0	0	0	0
L1-based strategy	**5**	**1.40**	**5**	**1.36**
6. Language switching	5	1.40	5	1.36
7. Foreignizing	0	0	0	0
Modification devices	**309**	**86.55**	**318**	**86.41**
8. Comprehension check	0	0	0	0
9. Clarification request	0	0	0	0
10. Overlap	0	0	0	0
11. Back channel	0	0	0	0
12. Self-repair	60	16.80	63	17.12
13. Confirmation	0	0	0	0
14. Pausing	249	69.75	255	19.29
Nonlinguistic strategy	**31**	**8.68**	**33**	**8.97**
15. Gesture	31	8.68	33	8.97
16. Mime	0	0	0	0
Total	**357**	**100**	**368**	**100**

Table 3 showed that 10 subtypes of CSs were checked in the observation form while the students performed the role-play task (two-way task). Pausing (233, 53.81%) was mostly used by the students, followed by self-repair (64, 14.78%), gesture (44, 10.16%), back channel (30, 6.93%), confirmation (25, 5.77%), language switching (16, 3.70%), comprehension check (12, 2.77%), clarification request (5, 1.15%), approximation (2, 0.46%) and overlap (2, 0.46%). The results also showed that the students used 4 main types of CSs. Modification devices were the main type of CSs that was mostly used by the students (371, 85.68%), followed by non-linguistic strategy (44, 10.16%), L1-based strategy (16, 3.70%), and target language-based strategy (2, 0.46%).

In terms of the transcribed data, the findings showed that the students used 10 subtypes of CSs. The most frequently used strategy was pausing (239, 53.47%), followed by self-repair (66, 14.77%), gesture (46, 10.29%), back channel (30, 6.71%), confirmation (27, 6.04%), language switching (16, 3.58%), comprehension check (12, 2.68%), clarification request (5, 1.12%), overlap (4, 0.89), and approximation (2, 0.45%). Moreover, the results showed 4 main types of CSs that were employed by the students. Modification devices were mostly used by the students (383, 85.68%), followed by non-linguistic strategy (46, 10.29%), L1-based strategy (16, 3.58%), and target language-based strategy, (2, 0.45%). However, avoidance strategy was not used by the students.

Table 4. *The comparison of the frequency and percentage of types of CSs used by the students in both picture description task and role play task*

Types of Communication Strategies	Observation form		Transcription Data	
	frequency	*%*	*frequency*	*%*
Avoidance strategy	**3**	**0.38**	**3**	**0.37**
1. Topic avoidance	0	0	0	0
2. Message avoidance	3	0.38	3	0.37
Target Language-based strategy	**11**	**1.39**	**11**	**1.35**
3. Approximation	7	0.87	7	0.86
4. Circumlocution	4	0/51	4	0.49
5. Direct asking	0	0	0	0
L1-based strategy	**21**	**2.66**	**21**	**2.58**
6. Language switching	21	2.66	21	2.58
7. Foreignizing	0	0	0	0
Modification devices	**680**	**86.08**	**701**	**86.01**
8. Comprehension check	12	1.52	12	1.47
9. Clarification request	5	0.63	5	0.61
10. Overlap	2	0.25	4	0.49
11. Back channel	30	3.78	30	3.68
12. Self-repair	124	15.70	129	15.83
13. Confirmation	25	3.16	27	3.31
14. Pausing	482	61.01	494	60.61
Nonlinguistic strategy	**75**	**9.49**	**79**	**9.69**
15. Gesture	75	9.49	79	9.69
16. Mime	0	0	0	0
Total	**790**	**100**	**815**	**100**

As can be seen in table 4, the comparison of the frequency and percentage of types of CSs used by the students while performing both one-way and two-way tasks. 12 subtypes of CSs were observed in both one-way and two-way tasks. The most frequently used strategy was pausing (482, 61.01%), followed by self-repair (124, 15.70%), gesture (75, 9.49%), back channel (30, 3.78%), confirmation (25, 3.16%), language switching (21, 2.66%), comprehension check (12, 1.52%), approximation (7, 0.87%), clarification request (5, 0.63%), circumlocution (4, 0.51%), and message avoidance (3, 0.38%). The least frequently used strategy was overlap (2, 0.25%). However, topic avoidance, direct asking, foreignizing, and mime were not observed in both tasks. In terms of 5 main types of CSs, the findings showed that the students used all 5 main types of CSs. The students mostly used modification devices (680, 86.08%), followed by nonlinguistic strategy (75, 9.49%), L1-based strategy (21, 2.66%), target language-based strategy (11, 1.39%), and avoidance strategy (3, 0.38%).

In terms of the transcribed data, the findings showed that 12 subtypes of CSs were employed by the students in both one-way and two-way tasks. The most frequently used strategy was pausing (494, 60.61%), followed by self-repair (129, 15.83%), gesture (79, 9.69%), back channel (30, 3.68%), confirmation (27, 3.31%), language switching (21, 2.58%), comprehension check (12, 1.47%), approximation (7, 0.86%), clarification request (5, 0.61%), circumlocution (4, 0.49%) and overlap (4, 0.49%). The least frequently used strategy was message avoidance (3, 0.37%). Moreover, the results showed that 4 CSs that were topic avoidance, direct asking, foreignizing, and mime were not used by the

students. The results also showed that all 5 main types were employed by the students. The most frequently used strategy was modification devices (680, 86.08%), followed by non-linguistic strategy (75, 9.49%), L1-based strategy (21, 2.66%), target language-based strategy (11, 1.39%), and avoidance strategy (3, 0.38%).

Table 5. *The Chi-square test of the types of CSs used by the students in the observation form*

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.195a	4	.004
Likelihood Ratio	17.036	4	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.643	1	.105
N of Valid Cases	790		

In Table 5, the Chi-square test was used to examine the difference in the types of CSs used in one-way and two-way tasks checked in the observation form. The findings showed that there was a significant difference between the students' use of types of CSs in both one-way and two-way tasks (.04)

Table 6. *The Chi-square test of the types of CSs used by the students in the transcribed data*

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pear Pearson Chi-Square	13.855a	4	.008
Likelihood Ratio	15.552	4	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.969	1	.005
N of Valid Cases	815		

As can be seen in Table 6, the Chi-square test was used to examine the difference in the types of CSs used in one-way and two-way tasks coded from the transcribed data. The findings showed that there was a significant difference between the students' use of types of CSs in both the one-way and two-way tasks (.008).

6. Conclusion

In the present study, different CSs were used in different speaking tasks. Modification devices were the main type of CSs that was mostly employed by the participants in both one-way task (picture description) and two-way task (role- play). Among 16 subtypes of CSs, pausing was the most frequently used strategy. However, 4 subtypes of CSs that were topic avoidance, direct asking, foreignizing, and mime were not employed by the students in this study. The findings also showed that the students used various types of communication strategies while performing two different tasks.

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