Communication Strategies of Indonesian EFL Adult Learners in An Online Learning Environment: A View Towards Strategic Competence

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ABSTRACT

In oral communication, the rules of grammar should not be the only focus of EFL learners. The rules of use are also important as it may reflect learners' communicative competence. Furthermore, to cope with communication breakdown when faced with a problem in communicating using English as a foreign language, learners need to have strategic competence. Therefore, the present study is interested in exploring intermediate adult EFL learners' strategic competence in an online English course through their use of communication strategies. Upon researching this matter, several steps were taken. A private class in an online English course consisting of seven adult intermediate learners of English were explored for this research. To collect data, observation of the students' interactions and taking field notes were done. Furthermore, video recording was done to record the class for further analysis. After that, the data were analyzed and coded based on the reduction and achievement communication strategies employed by the subjects of this study. The results indicate that the subjects in the study performed message abandonment as reduction strategies, but not topic avoidance. In achievement strategies, the subjects were observed to utilize circumlocution, approximation, all-purpose words, literal translation, code-switching, and appeal for help. They also used time gaining strategies through the use of fillers. These results indicated that learners utilize their strategic competence through communication strategies when communication breakdown and when they had linguistic deficiencies

Keywords: Communicative competence, communication strategies, EFL learners, strategic competence, online course

ABSTRAK

Dalam komunikasi lisan, peraturan tatabahasa tidak seharusnya menjadi satu-satunya tumpuan pelajar EFL. Peraturan penggunaan juga penting kerana ia mungkin mencerminkan kecekapan komunikatif pelajar. Tambahan pula, untuk mengatasi gangguan komunikasi apabila menghadapi masalah dalam berkomunikasi menggunakan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing, pelajar perlu mempunyai kecekapan strategik. Oleh itu, kajian ini berminat untuk meneroka kecekapan strategik pelajar EFL dewasa pertengahan dalam kursus Bahasa Inggeris dalam talian melalui penggunaan strategi komunikasi mereka. Setelah meneliti perkara ini, beberapa langkah telah diambil. Satu kelas persendirian dalam kursus bahasa Inggeris dalam talian yang terdiri daripada tujuh orang dewasa pelajar pertengahan bahasa Inggeris telah diterokai untuk penyelidikan ini. Untuk mengumpul data, pemerhatian terhadap interaksi pelajar dan pencatatan nota lapangan telah dilakukan. Tambahan pula, rakaman video dilakukan untuk merakam kelas untuk analisis lanjut. Selepas itu, data dianalisis dan dikodkan berdasarkan strategi komunikasi pengurangan dan pencapaian yang digunakan oleh subjek kajian ini. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa subjek dalam kajian melakukan strategi *message abandonment* sebagai strategi pengurangan, tetapi tidak dengan strategi *topic avoidance*. Dalam strategi pencapaian, subjek menggunakan strategi *circumlocution, approximation, all-purpose words, literal translation, code-switching,* dan *appeal for help*. Mereka juga menggunakan strategi *time-gaining* melalui penggunaan kata-kata pengisi atau *filler*. Dapatan kajian diharapkan dapat memberi lebih banyak gambaran tentang strategi

komunikasi pelajar dewasa, khususnya apabila proses pembelajaran dijalankan dalam persekitaran dalam talian. Hasil kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa pelajar menggunakan kecekapan strategik mereka melalui strategi komunikasi apabila gangguan komunikasi dan apabila mereka mengalami kekurangan linguistik. Oleh kerana masa yang terhad, temuduga tidak dapat dijalankan. Ini mungkin dilakukan dalam kajian akan datang tentang strategi komunikasi dalam bilik darjah Bahasa Inggeris kerana kajian lepas yang menggunakan temu bual sebagai salah satu kaedah pengumpulan data adalah terhad.

Kata kunci: Kompetensi komunikasi, kecekapan strategik, kursus dalam talian, pelajar EFL, strategi komunikasi

INTRODUCTION

To speak competently in English as a foreign language for non-native speakers is not only to speak with high grammatical accuracy but also to speak with 'the rules of use'. Hymes (1972) states that aside from the rules of grammar, there are the rules of use, without which the rules of grammar would be useless. In other words, when speaking in a foreign language, knowledge of grammar alone is not sufficient for learners, as they also have to understand the language's rules of use or appropriateness. It was stated that one's understanding of the use of appropriate language within a given context is a reflection of one's ability to communicate (Ellisafny, 2013). This can be achieved through exposure to the language. However, getting exposed to English inputs as much as possible, especially spoken discourses, is difficult for learners in the Indonesian EFL context, since Indonesia is an expanding circle country in Kachru's (1992) model of world Englishes. This means English is not used as a language of communication in public domains. Therefore, knowing the importance of English nowadays, it necessitates Indonesian EFL learners to look elsewhere to learn English, given the position of English as a foreign language in the country. One of the choices for them is to join an English language course provided by private language schools.

Driven by the nature of learning, which has become more individualistic, the market for private education has grown rapidly (Biesta, 2006). This condition is also true for English learning since the language itself is used internationally (Černá, 2020). In fact, English is said to be the most popular subject when it comes to private education, especially among countries that use it as a foreign language (Yung, 2019). Indonesia is not an exception, as many private English education providers can be found here, whether offline or online. Moreover, private education of English language learning is not only popular among young learners or school students, but also among adults. Based on a study, the reasons for adults to study English in a private course are to communicate with the language and integrate with other people with different L1 (Souri & Merc, 2022). Moreover, according to Tseng (2014), based on EFL learners' needs in Asia, it was found that speaking is perceived to be the most necessary skill to have in English. Thus, improving speaking might become the priority to develop for adult learners who join an English private course.

It has been stated by Burkart (1998, p. 68) that for language learners to speak well, they need to have the knowledge regarding the language conventions such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, language functions which are important for the clarity of the message, and social and cultural norms. The notion of communicative competence might be important to bring to light in this context. This term was put forward for the first time by Hymes (1972). Furthermore, following Canale and Swain's (1980) notion, communicative competence is a global competence that subsumes four related competencies: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. This paper focuses on strategic competence, which can be said as a learner's strategy to face difficulties when breakdowns in communication occur (Bokijonovna, 2022). This competence is realized by a learner's communication strategies when speaking in his or her L2.

To be more precise, the current study is interested in knowing adult learners' strategic competence in a Task-Based Learning online classroom environment.

First coined by linguist Dell Hymes (1972), communicative competence is known as both implicit and explicit knowledge of grammar and language use. From Hymes' (1972) idea, it can be noted that his idea includes the knowledge of structure and sociolinguistic competence, which is the competence to know appropriateness in communication (Ellisafny, 2013). This is also a further discussion regarding Chomsky's (1965) notion of competence, which concerns with the speaker-listener knowledge which enable a person to produce grammatically correct sentences. Therefore, its focus is only on a person's grammatical knowledge rather than Hymes' (1972) idea to also take a look at the sociolinguistic competence. Furthermore, models of communicative competence have also been discussed by other scholars, especially by Canale and Swain (1980)

The model developed by Canale and Swain (1980) of communicative competence is the most common model discussed and used by contemporary researchers and scholars in the field of applied linguistics. Continuing on Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980) proposed that there are four important components of communicative competence. Those four important components are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence. Canale and Swain's (1980) idea on grammatical competence is similar as the one discussed by Hymes (1972), in which it consists of a speaker's knowledge regarding language conventions, such as rules of morphology, syntax, structure, and phonology. This competence reflects the language's underlying system. Sociolinguistic competence, as the name suggests, reflects a speaker's knowledge on sociocultural rules of language use (Canale & Swain, 1980). A speaker should understand the appropriateness for producing utterances according to the context.

Both of the competencies mentioned above are similar to Hymes' (1972), who also included these two competencies in his seminal work. Furthermore, the other two competencies, strategic and discourse competence, were added to the discussion on communicative competence by Canale and Swain (1980). Discourse competence was added by Canale (1983). It deals with a speaker's knowledge and ability to combine language structures and functions into a coherent speech. Lastly, strategic competence reflects on a speaker's ability to deal with breakdowns in communication using communication strategies to compensate for the lack of grammatical and sociolinguistic competencies (Canale & Swain, 1980). Relating this to foreign language learning, it is common for a foreign speaker of a language to have a lack of linguistic abilities, as different speakers might have different proficiency level.

As it has been discussed, strategic competence is one's ability to deal with communication breakdowns (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). These breakdowns in communication might occur due to the speaker's lack of performance variables or insufficient grammatical, discourse, and sociolinguistic competences (Bokijonovna, 2022). Thus, strategic competence is there to compensate for the lacks of other competences in order to maintain communication effectively. Savignon (1983) also illustrated that strategic competence is employed when learners have imperfect knowledge on rules. Based on that fact, it is recommended for foreign language teachers to develop students' strategic competence as it is considered to be an important skill (Bokijonovna, 2022).

Within second language acquisition, the notion strategic competence could be related to the concept of interlanguage. As proposed by Mariani (1994), any language speaker who does not speak a given language as a mother tongue should rely on an incomplete competence. Within the frame of interlanguage, strategic competence might be defined as the ability to cope with unexpected problems when speaking a foreign language, and when the speaker is yet to have a ready-made solution to be applied (Musyahda, 2005). Thus, it is important for foreign language

learners, in this case learners of English, to acquire this competence, since speaking in a language not native to them might be a challenging tasks. Therefore, they need to learn how to be 'strategic'.

When communicating orally, it is obvious that a speaker might have a communicative goal. However, achieving that goal might not be an easy thing to do, especially when one is speaking in his or her foreign language, not native tongue. As has been stated before, this problem might occur due to the lacks of grammatical and sociolinguistic competences (Mariani, 1994). This is where strategic competence comes in to play, and it is realized through the speaker's communication strategies to compensate for the lacks in the other communicative competences. This is one way for a speaker to cope with a communication breakdown when having to communicate in a foreign language (Musyahda, 2005). According to Mariani (1994), in coping with communication breakdown, learners have two basic strategies, which are reduction and achievement strategies. Dornyei (1995), following the traditional conception of communication strategies, added the third strategies called time gaining strategies.

When communication breaks down, one has the choice to apply reduction strategies. These strategies involve alteration, reduction, and even a complete abandonment of the intended message (Dörnyei, 1995). The sub-strategies of reduction are message abandonment and topic avoidance. Message abandonment refers to the discontinue of the message that a speaker was intended to say due to language difficulties. Topic avoidance is when a speaker avoids talking about a certain topic or concept due to not having the language capability to talk about it.

On the other hand, a speaker might also choose to apply achievement strategies. These strategies are employed by speakers when they try to manipulate their language in order to still achieve their original communicative goals (Dörnyei, 1995). This so-called manipulation happens because of linguistic deficiencies they have, and these strategies are somehow able to compensate these deficiencies (Dörnyei, 1995). There are several achievement strategies according to Dornyei (1995). Firstly, the manipulation can be in the form of looking for alternatives of the words. Circumlocution is when one forgets a word and so he or she tries describe the target object or action. Approximation refers to the use of alternative term of the target lexical item. Speakers can also use all-purpose words, such as the overuse of *things, stuffs,* and *thingy.* They can also use word-coinage, or in other words using nonexisting L2 words, such as *vegetarianist* for the target word *vegetarian.* Other means of achievement strategies can be realized through non-linguistic means and appeal for help. Other than these manipulations, speakers might also use their L1 knowledge to compensate for their deficiencies. These include literal translation, foreignization, which is to use an L1 word with L2 phonology, and code-switching. Finally, Dornyei (1995) also considered the use filling words and phrases, such as *well, you know, as a matter of fact,* etc., as stalling or time-gaining strategies.

Strategic competence is possible to be developed through a method called task-based learning (Alahmed, 2015). The goal of task-based learning (TBL) is for the learners to use the target language, in this case English, in the class as the target language context which is made as authentic as possible (Saidah et al., 2020). TBL has also been said to have a core in communicative language teaching (CLT) (Hashemi et al., 2012). Hymes' (1972) notion on communicative competence has been said to be the driving force for making language learning to be more contextual and relevant to students through the use of the target language in class (Willis & Willis, 2001). If in a traditional language classroom students learn through drilling and memorizing language forms, in a TBL classroom students learn through communicative tasks designed to encourage student-centered learning through natural and authentic interactions. In such student-centered classrooms with TBL as the approach, the role of the teacher is to be the facilitator to provide students with input and activities or tasks to do in class. Therefore, students are encouraged to have freedom in using and learning the target language

TBL has been considered one of the most significant approaches in pedagogy and language teaching (Jia & Harji, 2022). Attention has been put forward to it in the past three decades (Long, 2015). By some scholars, TBL is deemed as an approach which is more process-oriented and is used to develop language skills, particularly communicative skills (Aliasin et al., 2019; Ding, 2016). As the name suggests, task-based learning utilizes tasks in the teaching and learning processes. Although there is no widely agreed consensus for the meaning of task in TBL, there are some common features identified in the tasks according to Ellis. These common features are that TBL focuses more on meaning, is centered on communication, and goal-oriented. Based on its orientation towards communication rather than language forms, scholars believed that TBL might be the most effective approach to use (Jia & Harji, 2022).

As TBL has been deemed to be effective to be implemented in language courses and the focus of language learning has shifted from language form to function, TBL has penetrated and influenced teachings of English language worldwide, including the region of Southeast Asia (Butler, 2011). Before TBL was introduced in Asia, most language classrooms were done using what is called as synthetic approaches (Butler, 2011). Some examples of these prevalent approaches in the past were grammar translation and audio lingual methods. These approaches drew criticism and the most frequent argument used against was that it led to isolation of linguistic forms from their meaning since synthetic approaches put a focus on linguistic forms (Long & Robinson, 1998). Based on this and the fact that communication using English is said to be important due to rapid development in international exchanges in business, communication, and technology, TBL has become preferred by many Asian countries as there was a rising concern of English communication skills among the Asian population (Butler, 2011). With the advancement of technology, language courses are now possible to be conducted online, which makes TBL to be implemented in online environments or classrooms as well.

TBL is not only applicable in traditional face-to-face classrooms. Online learning conducted through online conference applications is also possible to be conducted using TBL. The implementation of TBL in online classrooms also became mandatory for language courses that conduct classes in TBL when Covid-19 pandemic hit the globe in 2020. Even though the pandemic has been declared over, online learning is still numerously done in Indonesia. When implementing TBL in an online class, teachers should treat it differently from traditional face-to-face TBL classrooms. Not only that teachers should foster and encourage students to interact in class, but they also need to ensure that students do not get distracted as more distractions can disperse students' attention when studying in an online classroom compared to a face-to-face offline class. Due to this, teaching online might be said to be a more demanding task in the aspect of cognitive for the teachers.

Several studies have explored on strategic competence and communication strategies employed by EFL learners. In the Indonesian EFL context, studies have been done within formal school contexts of middle school (Dewi et al., 2018; Fauziati et al., 2020) and university (Rahman & Isroyana, 2021; Surahim, 2021). These studies elicit data using structured interview or elicitation task. Interestingly, there is a study which looks at learners' strategic competence in a task-based debate activity in a private English course (Saidah et al., 2020). Moving outside the Indonesian EFL context, one study in the Iranian EFL context argued that communication strategies might be beneficial for advanced learners to improve their communicative competence in English (Ostovar-Namaghi et al., 2022). Still in Iran, another study has explored on the relation between learners' proficiency level and their choice of communication strategies (Yarahmadzehi et al., 2015). A study on EFL learners' communication strategies in a virtual exchange between Polish and Taiwanese students has also been examined (Huang & Loranc, 2022). Lastly, a study concerned with language testing researched on IELTS test takers' strategic reactions in the IELTS speaking test, and one of the aspects being studied is the communication strategies (Fernandez, 2018).

Based on these studies, previous research on communication strategies and strategic competence on EFL learners have yet to explore on EFL learners' communication strategies in an online classroom which uses task-based learning, or to elicit data from learners studying in a non-formal language course. Moreover, most studies put the spotlight on students in formal education. Therefore, the current study aims to explore the types of communication strategies employed by adult learners enrolling in an online English course program, and how these strategies reflect their strategic competence.

METHODS

The design of the current research is descriptive qualitative aimed at exploring the communication strategies of adult English learners in an online learning environment as a view towards their strategic competence. As the study is conducted under the qualitative approach, it is interested in exploring the data in-depth rather than computing them. The subjects are students of an online English class for adults provided by an online English course based in Indonesia. Seven subjects, each of whom had different backgrounds, agreed to volunteer in this study. Regarding the level of proficiency, the subjects were considered intermediate learners, categorized as CEFR B1-B2. For ethical considerations, the real names of the subjects are not mentioned in this study. Each participant is coded as S1 until S7. As the researcher acted as the teacher as well as the participant observer, the researcher is coded as R in the transcripts shown in this article.

The current research focuses on classroom language of the adult learners in the online class, and therefore, tries to collect the data in the form of spoken utterances of the learners as a way to analyze them using the framework of communication strategies. Through classroom observations, the data were collected from natural and authentic setting of online classroom. The key instrument of this research is the researcher as a participant observer. Not only from observation, but other instruments of data collection were used as well. Field notes were used to validate and keep track of the observation. The class sessions were also video recorded using Zoom record feature. Through this method, the researcher was able to review the recordings repeatedly to conduct deeper analysis. Moreover, the data were collected from three class sessions of the online class. The first and second sessions talked about education as the topic, while the third meeting discussed the topic of health.

The raw data collected, which were the subjects' spoken utterances, were transcribed and analyzed. The transcription was possible to be done through the recordings of each session. Furthermore, the video as well as the transcription were analyzed to scrutinize the communication strategies employed by the subjects. The analysis was done based on the framework of communication strategies (Dörnyei, 1995) in which there are three main components of reduction, achievement, and stalling strategies. After going through analysis, the processed data were coded and classified based on the relevant sub-strategies. Furthermore, these data are displayed in the form of transcription.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion of the current research. The avoidance strategies found are presented first, followed by achievement, and time-gaining strategies. Excerpts of the interview in which the strategies are found are also presented.

Avoidance Strategies

From the two strategies included in avoidance, only message abandonment is done by the subjects of the study, and no instance of topic avoidance can be found. Message abandonment may be argued to happen because the subjects do not have the capacity to talk about the message more (Dörnyei, 1995). However, it can also be related to the content knowledge of the subjects, not merely language (Ostovar-Namaghi et al., 2022). The followings are excerpts of the selected interviews.

> Excerpt 1:
> *R*: Should children rely on their parents or try to be more independent?
> *S2*: I think (.) In my opinion, it is better for children to be independent. But I don't mean that it's for children below ten. I mean after ten, children need to learn to be more independent. Because, like (.) uhhhh, we cannot ask our parents to do many things, right? We should learn to do things by ourselves, ***and then……*** (paused for around 5 seconds)
> *R:* Then? Anything else?
> *S2:* No. (shaking her head)

> Excerpt 2:
> *R*: Should children rely on their parents or try to be more independent?
> *S3:* I think as they grow older they need to learn how to (.) uhmm, rely on themselves. ***So, as th-…*** according to my experience, I handle elementary school kids, right? …

> Excerpt 3:
> *S4:* But, once they got into university it is better for them to be independent and stand on their own foot, cause you know (.) There are so many decisions that we have to make, that we have to think by ourselves, and we have to actually contemplate, you know, alone, without any disturbance or, you know, interruption from parents or ***another… (.) uhmm probably another (.) uhh you know, uhhh (.) intervention from the environment.***

The excerpts above are examples of message abandonment strategies employed by the subjects, particularly subject 2, subject 3, and subject 4. This might be the case since in this part, the subjects are encouraged to speak and discuss a given topic at length. In the excerpts above, the subjects were responding to the question on whether or not students should be independent.

In excerpt 1, subject 2 abandoned her sentence by saying *"… and then…"* with a high tone, signaling that she would like say more things. However, she paused for around 5 seconds without continuing her speech. The researcher asked her to continue, but she shook her head. This might be due to linguistic deficiency. Subject 4 in excerpt 3 might also indicate the same problem. When she said the word another, it was expected that she would add another object. However, she paused briefly and also used filler words. Then, she said "*…intervention form the environment*" which is not a continuation of the previous statement. In this case, the subject abandoned the message, which was probably due to not knowing what words to use, and changed it into a new sentence, with a word that she knew. In excerpt 3, unlike subject 2 and 4, subject 3 was not struggling with her sentence although she abandoned her message. The subject did not pause or use fillers when abandoning her message. Rather, she just deliberately changed the topic to talk about her own experience.

In the next excerpts, the subjects were responding to the prompt given which asked them whether they like to study or not. It can be identified that message abandonment might also be indicated with a brief pause and fillers, such as *uhh* and *umm.* Excerpt 6 also shows that message can be abandoned by saying 'I guess that's it' to indicate that subject 7 did not want to continue the message she was about to convey.

> Excerpt 4:

S1: When I study something new, I feel (.) ummm satisfied with myself. (pause) And **when I'm… (pause) ummmm**, and also I would like to get a new knowledge.

Excerpt 5:
R: Do you like studying?
S5: Honestly, I don't like studying, but ummm I think it depends on the subject. The subject that I love, of course I enjoy studying that. But if I don't like it, ummm **it really… (pause) uhhhh**, I don't like to study that because it is a pressure to me.

Excerpt 6:
R: Do you like studying? Why or why not?
S7: Honestly, I don't really like to study, but my job, like, makes me need to study. I am a teacher and every day I need to learn. I need to study. And I am, ummm enjoy to study even though I don't like to study, and then, **ummmm, I guess that's it.**

The avoidance strategies found in this study are comparable to previous studies. Within the context of a debating class, reduction strategies were indicated by keeping silent or not participating further in the discussion (Saidah et al., 2020). However, it was found in this study of adult intermediate learners that they might also use fillers or even deliberately change the topic of discussion. This is also supported by a study of advanced learners that fillers and pauses are common signs of avoidance strategies (Ostovar-Namaghi et al., 2022).

Achievement Strategies

From the observations, there are six achievement strategies found. Each of the strategies, along with the examples, are shown below.

a)   Circumlocution

The first type of achievement strategies used is circumlocution. According to Dornyei (1995), circumlocution happens when learners describe an action or object which is targeted instead of saying the exact word for that action or object instead. Excerpt 7 and 8 below shows two examples of circumlocution uttered by subject 3 and subject 6. Excerpt 7 was elicited from the meeting which talked about the topic of education while excerpt 8 was gathered from the session which discussed the topic of health.

Excerpt 7
S3: Students should also, uhh you know, explore themselves. They should not only study but also, uhhh, **do activities, you know, like sports or music at school**.
R: Are you trying to say extracurricular activities?
S3: Yes, **extracurricular**.

Excerpt 8
S6: Our health also, ummm, depends on the food that we eat, especially umm **the things we put to make the food.**

In excerpt 7, it is clear that subject 3 was intended to say the word extracurricular. However, subject 3 exemplified the description of extracurricular, the intended word, with the activities of sports or music done at school. It was clear that subject 3 was intended to say the word extracurricular when the researcher clarified by asking whether subject 3 would like to say the word *extracurricular.* Subject 6 also did circumlocution in excerpt 8. She explained the targeted word by exemplifying the description of the things one put to make a certain food. It can be inferred that what subject 6 was intended to say was the word ingredients.

b) Approximation

The strategy of approximation is used when a person uses an alternative term as closely as possible in place of the target lexical item they would actually mean to convey (Dörnyei, 1995). The use of approximation might be due to the limitation of a person's vocabulary in L2 (Dewi et al., 2018). The following excerpts are examples of approximation found in this study. Excerpt 9 and 10 talk about the topic of health, while excerpt 11 and 12 talk about the topic of education.

> Excerpt 9
> *S1:* I would like to say I really take care of my health. It's because I know how does it feel when I get sick and I couldn't do anything and I had to be, uhhh, like that, in that condition. So, uhh, I like to maintain my health as well. The activity I like to do is uhh, walking around because it's easy and simple and I can do it every day. **I got a lot of, umm advantage from this activity.**

> Excerpt 10
> *S3*: Right now, we can see that sport is a trend. You can see that **bicycle is very famous** activity right now (.) uhhh and since covid-19, people are more aware of their health. Sports are becoming lifestyle right now.

Two examples of approximation strategies found in the conversations about the topic of health are shown by the excerpts above. In excerpt 9, subject 1 used the word 'advantage' in her speech. However, in the context of the utterance she said, she should have used the more appropriate term 'benefit' instead of the word advantage. The same thing can be said with excerpt 10. There are two words used as approximation strategies by subject 3. Those words are *bicycle* and *famous*. In the context of the conversation, subject 3 was talking about sports activities. Therefore, subject 3 should aim to use the name of the activity instead which is *cycling.* Furthermore, the word *famous* might be used as an approximation for the word *popular.*

> Excerpt 11
> *S4:* Probably, it takes about (.) ummm (.) in my personal opinion, it takes about three to seven days for parents to actually **deliver** their children, and you know, accompany their children to the school and then after that probably they can let their children to go by themselves.

> Excerpt 12
> *S2*: But, I know there are parents who work so they cannot **send** their children to school.

Subject 4 also did approximation strategy by saying *'deliver their children'* instead of '*take their children'.* In this context, saying 'take their children' to school is more appropriate as children is animate plural nouns. The verb 'deliver' is used for inanimate nouns. In this case, subject 4 might not be able to remember the target word she should be intended to say. Moreover, she used a word with almost similar meaning to compensate for that. The same approximation on the word 'deliver' was also done by subject 2. Subject 2 used the word *send* instead of *take.* Therefore, it can be inferred that the subjects used approximation strategy to estimate a target word they were intended to say. They used another word which almost has the same semantic meaning with the target word.

c) Use of all-purpose words

When using all-purpose words, learners extend the use of empty lexical items where specific words are lacking (Dörnyei, 1995). They might also overuse these words. Below is an example of the use of all-purpose words. In these excerpts, subject 3 was responding to a prompt about the topic of health, while subject 6's response was to answer a question about early education.

Excerpt 13
S3: Right now, people try to... (pause) more aware of **the stuffs** they eat. There are many junk food right now and sweet drinks that lead to obesity, but people right now are more aware that consuming those **things** are not healthy.

Excerpt 14
S6: For uhhh, (pause) uhh -- **what do you call it?** Uhh formal education. For formal education, I don't think that it's good to put kids as early as possible.

In excerpt 13, the use of the word *'stuffs'* and '*things*' as all-purpose words can be identified. As the topic being talked about was health, particularly food, subject 3 used the all-purpose word stuffs in place of a more specific word, such as food. The same thing can be said with the word *things.* By saying the word *consuming,* it can be assumed that the word *things* also refer to food. In excerpt 14, it was observed that subject 6 said '*what do you call it?*'. According to Dornyei (1995), this exact expression is included in the strategy of using all-purpose words. When using these all-purpose words, learners are said to be using or repeating unimportant general words instead of using specific words (Dörnyei, 1995; Saidah et al., 2020). In previous studies, some instances of all-purpose words using words such as *things* and *stuffs* could also be found (Saidah et al., 2020; Surahim, 2021).

d) Literal Translation

According to Dornyei (1995), achievement strategy of literal translation is used by learners to literally translate a lexical item, an idiom, a compound word or structure from L1 to L2. In excerpt 15, a literal translation of L1 structure into L2 can be found.

Excerpt 15
S5: When we have a relaxing environment, uhhh we can **more focus** with the materials that our teacher give.

In excerpt 15, subject 5 used the structure of her L1, which is Indonesian, to her L2 production. In Indonesian, the adjective comes before the verb. Therefore, the phrase *more focus* might be a literal translation of *lebih fokus* in Indonesian. However, this is not a correct structure in English. To say *lebih fokus* as a target word in English, subject 5 should have said *focus more.* This type of literal translation was also found in the study on students in a debate class (Saidah et al., 2020).

e) Code Switching

Code-switching is one of the achievement strategies when learners use an L1 or L3 word in place of the target word in the target language they were intended to say (Dörnyei, 1995). It is used by learners when they lack vocabularies in the target language and try to compensate using their L1 knowledge to reach their communicative goals (Saidah et al., 2020). Excerpt 16 and 17 show two examples of code-switching as an achievement strategy.

Excerpt 16
S7: I think being smart is not the first priority, but uhhh (.) I think we can't live well uhh without brain, because many people can... uhhh, can fooling us, fooling uhh, ***dibodohi.*** I don't know what to say.

Excerpt 17
S6: Uhhh actually, being smart is less important than having a good attitude, but I don't say smart is not important ya. Good attitude is more important than smart. Because, uhhh (.) **apa ya?** Uhhh when you are smart and don't have good attitude, you cannot be good people, and now we need good people not only uhh, smart people.

Both examples above demonstrate the use of code-switching by subject 7 and subject 6. Subject 7 used an L1 word *dibodohi,* as she was not sure what she had said earlier, *'can fooling us',* was correct or not. Therefore, she reverted to use her native language. On the other hand, subject 6 used an Indonesian filler word *apa ya?* in between her sentence. The use of code-switching as an achievement strategy was also found in other studies (Fauziati et al., 2020; Saidah et al., 2020). Furthermore, the use of this strategy was said to be an indication of the learners cultural background and interlanguage skill (Saidah et al., 2020)

f)   Appeal for help

Appeal for help strategy is used when a student asks for help from his or her teacher or even from his or her friends (Dörnyei, 1995). This strategy is usually done by students either directly or non-directly. When appealing for help direct, students do so by posing a question directly to his or her interlocutors. An example of direct appeal for help can be seen in the excerpt below. In this excerpt, subject 7 was discussing about his first day at university when he was still a student. This was elicited from the meeting which discussed the topic of education.

> Excerpt 18
> *S6*: I studied Law at University of Parahyangan Bandung. I met various people from various backgrounds and origins and it's an honor to meet them. I remember that the first day is like (.) um like, **perpeloncoan in English, sir? I don't know the word.**

The above excerpt is an example of direct appeal for help. Subject 6 appealed for help directly to the researcher by asking for the word in the target language through the use of the L1 word for it as the subject did not know the word for it. This is the same as what was found in one of the previous studies (Saidah et al., 2020). As an L1 word was used in this excerpt, it could be argued that subject 6 also used code-switching in reaching his communicative goal. Moreover, it should be noted that this is the only instance where an L1 word was used. This might be the case as all subjects are considered intermediate and upper-intermediate English users, so they should be comfortable enough in using the language. This finding is different from the study of Indonesian EFL learners of English by Fauziati et al. (2020) which found code-switching to be a common communication strategy among their sample.

However, indirect appeal for help was not found in previous studies. In the current research, an example of indirect appeal for help was found in excerpt 1. Subject 2 raised her intonation while saying '…and then' and paused for a while. According to Dornyei (1995), rising intonation and pause are two realizations of indirect appeal for help.

Time-Gaining Strategies

Time-gaining or stalling strategies are realized through the use of filling words or phrases in order to fill pauses or to have more time to think (Dörnyei, 1995). Intermediate learners in this study often use filler words when thinking about what to say. As seen in excerpt many excerpts shown before, many subjects filled their utterances with 'uhh…' filler. All the subjects also used 'ummm…' filler. The data generated in this study on stalling strategies are similar, in this case, with the study by Saidah et al. (2020) on EFL students in a debating class. Although the present study was not conducted in a similar context of debate, fillers were still found. It may be argued that, in this situation, learners use time gaining strategies to recall their memories of the target language knowledge or to think of solutions and alternatives in order to keep the communication flows (Saidah et al., 2020). Furthermore, many examples of time gaining strategies other than fillers are shown in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 20
S7: **I think** it's good to start formal education early.

Excerpt 21
S2: **Thank you for the question**. **In my opinion** (.) uhhh, I disagree that education should start as early as possible.

Excerpt 22
S3: **Well**, **I think** I am really interested in health related problems, because it's a long term thing.

Excerpt 20 and 22 shows both subjects using the time gaining strategies through the use of the expression *I think.* Similar with this, excerpt 21 shows subject 2 saying *in my opinion* as a time gaining or stalling strategy. Moreover, subject 2 also thanked the teacher for the question. Through these expressions, the subjects not only conveyed that their arguments they would say were subjective or that they thanked the question being given, but they also use them to stall or to gain times to fill the pauses while thinking about what they would like to say. This way, they would have more time to think what to say next.

Strategic Competence

It might be inferred that the use of communication strategies is the realization of learners' strategic competence as one of the components of communicative competence. When using communication strategies in a situation that forces them to use L2, in this case in an English classroom, it is actually a demonstration of their strategic competence to maintain the flow of communication to keep going even when their L2 proficiency overall is not proficient and despite of linguistic deficiencies and limited commands of sociocultural codes (Mariani, 1994). According to Mariani (1994), strategic competence may also be an indication of a learner's interlanguage. Through the use of communication strategies as what have been explained above, learners are said to develop their interlanguage. It was argued that interlanguage is a continuum (Musyahda, 2005). Based on this argument, through strategic competence and relying on learners' imperfect competence of L2, it is possible for learners to move along the continuum, gradually approaching ideal competence (Mariani, 1994).

From the results, the subjects were said to rely on their so-called imperfect competence of L2 through the use of communication strategies. The data shows three communication strategies. In avoidance strategies, the subjects in the current research abandoned their message as they might not have the linguistic capacity to continue the message (Dörnyei, 1995). It might be that they do not have enough lexicon to continue talking about the topic, and so they changed the discussion to something in which they had sufficient L2 knowledge. However, it may also be argued that it might be related to their knowledge on the subject matter being discussed itself rather than linguistic knowledge.

In achievement strategies, the subjects in the current research used several sub-strategies. These strategies are circumlocution, approximation, use of all-purpose words, literal translation, code switching, and appeal for help. Through these achievement strategies, subjects used other ways to reach their communicative goals. When communication breakdown because of their lack of L2 knowledge, they utilized their strategic competence through achievement strategies in order to keep the communication going. These results might indeed be comparable to previous studies researching on the same topic with different settings and subjects (Dewi et al., 2018; Fauziati et al., 2020; Rahman & Isroyana, 2021; Saidah et al., 2020). It should also be noted that one of the studies also explored on English debate task based learning classroom (Saidah et al., 2020). However, the present study could not find achievement strategy of nonlinguistic means. This is due to the limitation of online class which makes it difficult for the researcher to conduct a multimodal analysis on subjects' non-linguistic means, such as gesture. Word-coinage and

foreignizing strategies also could not be observed in the class, alog with a very minimum use of students' L1 knowledge. This might be the case since the subjects of this study are considered intermediate users, ranging from B1-B2.

Finally, several time-gaining strategies could also be identified in the classroom. The strategies are frequently observed through the use of fillers, which can be found numerously in the examples given in the results. Moreover, there were also some instances of using filling words or gambits to gain time to think. Through this way, learners utilized their strategic competence to gain time in order for them to think what should be spoken next.

CONCLUSION

Through observation, it can be gathered that intermediate level adult EFL learners use communication strategies as an indication of their strategic competence when they have linguistic deficiencies. It was found that learners in this study utilized message abandonment but not topic avoidance as reduction strategies. They were still willing to talk about a topic even though they may have lack of vocabulary, but they did abandon their message when communication breakdown occurred. As achievement strategies, learners used the strategies except word coinage, non-linguistic means, and foreignizing. As it was an online class, it was hard to observe learners' gesture or other modalities, which might be considered as one limitation of the current research. Learners also used time gaining strategies and these were observed numerously during the course of the research through fillers. This study is also limited in its data collection methods. Due to limited time, interviews could not be conducted. This may be done in future studies of communication strategies in English classrooms as previous studies using interview as one of the data collection methods were scarce. (word count: 7168)

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