

THE EFFECT OF GENDER ON COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED BY ELT STUDENTS

Putra Mahardhika, Ujang Suparman, Sudirman
putramahardhika14@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari pengaruh jenis kelamin dalam strategi- strategi berkomunikasi yang digunakan siswa pembelajar Bahasa Inggris dan strategi berkomunikasi apa yang lebih sering digunakan oleh siswa laki-laki dan siswa perempuan. Penelitian ini dilakukan di Universitas Lampung dimana sampel penelitiannya adalah siswa tahun kedua Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Strategi-strategi berkomunikasi siswa diambil melalui *interview task*. Data lalu diolah menggunakan SPSS. Hasil dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 394 strategi yang digunakan oleh laki-laki dan perempuan. Siswa laki-laki dan perempuan cenderung menggunakan “*fillers*” lebih sering daripada strategi-strategi lain. Hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada pengaruh signifikan dari jenis kelamin dalam strategi-strategi berkomunikasi. Akhirnya, *fillers* yang digunakan oleh laki-laki dan perempuan disebabkan oleh status mereka sebagai siswa pembelajar Bahasa Inggris dan kesempatan mereka yang lebih besar untuk berbicara Bahasa Inggris.

The study intended at investigating the effect of gender on Communication Strategies used by ELT students and which strategy is most frequently used by male and female students. This study was conducted in Lampung University whose participants were second year students of English Education Study Program. Students’ communication strategies were elicited through interview task. The data were then computed by SPSS. The results of the research then show that there are 394 communication strategies used by both males and female. The male and female students tend to use *fillers* more frequently than the other strategies. It also shows that there is no significant effect of gender on communication strategies. Last, fillers used by both males and females are possibly caused by their status as ELT students and their possibility to speak English more as ELT students.

Keywords: communication strategies, ELT students, gender.

INTRODUCTION

Learning a second language is basically different from learning the first language. English as the second language is also different from the other languages, especially Indonesian. Learners whose mother tongue are Indonesian sometimes meet those differences and consider them as the problems. The main problem of English learners in second language communication is possibly on how to communicate itself. When they are given chance to speak, they may become passive. However, it does not mean that they do not want to speak. They may have something to speak in their mind, but they are doubtful to speak. Consequently, as English learners, they may use some ways to express their minds in order to produce second language.

In order to overcome the difficulties in the second language communication, learners usually use particular ways to pass it. All of the learners' ways are known as communication strategies. According to Tarone (1981), communication strategies are a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures are not shared. From this statement, the researcher tried to focus more on the term "*meaning*". One of the problems in language learning is how to deal with the meaning. It also exists in the use of communication strategies. Learners may use communication strategies since they are dealing with the meaning.

In order to find out more about the term of communication strategies, it is important to take another definition. Ellis (1994) states that communication strategies are used primarily to deal with lexical problems, such as when a learner

does not know the word for ‘art gallery’, then, he refers it as a ‘picture place’. He also adds that communication strategies can also be used to get around a grammatical problem, as when a learner deliberately elects to use ‘ask’ instead of ‘make’ because of uncertainty regarding which form of the infinitive to use with ‘make’. From this statement, communication strategies are apparently not only about how to deal with meaning. It can be looked from Ellis’ explanation that communication can also deal with lexical problems or even the grammatical problem.

Besides the terms of lexical and grammatical problems, Ellis also mentions the term “uncertainty”. It is acceptable since the students sometimes are uncertain about what they should say in the conversation. The students then possibly use the communication strategies. From those two definitions, the researcher takes the point that communication strategies are the strategies used by the learners in order to deal with the meaning, lexical and grammatical problems and also the uncertainty in speaking the target language, in this study especially English.

Communication strategies may relate to some factors. One of the factors is gender. Gender which influences the daily communication also influences the communication on the language learning. Sometimes, gender is believed as the factor affecting the process of communication. Males sometimes speak to the point of the topic directly, while females sometimes speak it indirectly. That example may be able to explain the influence of gender in the communication. Gender influences not only the communication process but also the frequency of

communication strategies usage. Some studies have also been conducted in order to find out about the frequency of communication strategies usage. One of those studies is the study conducted by Lai (2010). The result shows that there are few differences between males and females when adopting strategies. Another research conducted by Moazen (2012), in which the result shows that there are no significant differences on the frequency of communication strategies used by male and female. Due to those differences, this study was conducted in order to find out whether there is the significantly different frequency of communication strategies used by male and female students. Besides, this study also investigated which communication strategy used most frequently by males and which communication strategy used most frequently by females.

Typology of communication strategies refers to the classification of the kind of communication strategies. It is proposed by the experts who ever conducted the research about the communication strategies. In communication strategies, some typologies of the communication strategies have been developed by experts. In this study, the researcher used the typology which is proposed by Dörnyei (1995). The typology is shown as follows:

Table 1. Typology of Communication Strategies by Dörnyei (1995)

	Communication Strategies	Description of Strategy
1.	Avoidance/ Reduction Strategies	
	a. Message Abandonment	Leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties.
	b. Topic Avoidance	Avoiding topic areas or concepts that pose language difficulties.
2.	Compensatory/ Achievement strategies	
	a. Circumlocution	Describing or exemplifying the target object of action. (e.g. the thing you open bottles with for corkscrew)
	b. Approximation	Using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target lexical item as closely possible. (e.g. ship for sailboat)
	c. Use of all-purpose word	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, thingy)
	d. Word Coinage	Creating a non-existing L2 word based on a supposed rule. (e.g. vegetarianist for vegetarian)
	e. Non-linguistic signals	Mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation.
	f. Literal Translation	Translating literally a lexical item, idiom, compound word, or structure from L1 to L2.
	g. Foreignizing	Using L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonology (i.e. with a L2 pronunciation) and/or morphology (e.g. adding to it a L2 suffix)
	h. Code-Switching	Using a L1 word with L1 pronunciation while speaking in L2.
	i. Appeal for Help	Asking for aid from interlocutor either directly (e.g. what do you call...?) or indirectly (e.g. rising intonation, pause, eye contact and puzzled expression).
3.	Stalling or time-gaining strategies.	
	a. Using fillers or hesitation device	It is to fill pauses and to gain time to think. (e.g. well, let's see, as a matter of fact)

The typology proposed by Dörnyei above seems to be the current typology in the communication strategies. Since it was proposed after the other typologies, this typology can be said as the development of the previous typology. This classification seems also to be easy to be analysed. The existence of this typology in many studies may indicate that it gives the explanation which is easy to be understood. Due to those factors, the researcher then used this typology in order to classify the communication strategies in this study.

METHODOLOGY

The participants of the research were a speaking class at the 2nd year of English Education Study Program in Education and Pedagogy Faculty at Lampung University. The data was taken by oral interview task. In the interview, the participants got 3 questions relating to the family, college, and the hot news topic. The oral interview task was also recorded by video recorder. The students' utterances were then transcribed and coded in order to analyse communication strategies proposed by Dörnyei (1995).

The data of this research was the students' utterances. Therefore, the data was in form of utterances. Although, the data was in form of utterances, the data is also calculated by using One Way ANOVA in order to measure the significance of the numbers of the communication strategies used by ELT students. It is used since this study applied the quantification of qualitative.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the oral interview, it was found that there were 394 communication strategies used by all participants. Male students used 180 communication strategies and female students used 214 communication strategies. From the 12 classifications of communication strategies proposed by Dörnyei (1995), it was also found that there were 11 communication strategies used by males. The strategy which is not used is foreignizing. Like male students, female students also used 11 communication strategies out of 12 communication strategies classified by Dörnyei. The strategy which was not used was also foreignizing. The example of foreignizing itself is like saying "*merica*", from the L1 word. However, it is spoken by using L2 pronunciation. Thus, it is pronounced "*mırırıca*". Why foreignizing is not used by the participants is possibly caused by the participants' proficiency level. It is because foreignizing is the strategy in which the learners use L1 word by adjusting to L2 phonology. Therefore, the level of participants as ELT students makes the participants not trying to overcome the problems by using L1 word but using L2 pronunciation.

The strategies used by females do not have significant difference from the strategies used by males. The numbers of the communication strategies used by males and females are as follows:

Table 2. Total Numbers of Communication Strategies used by males and females

Communication Strategies	CSs of male students		CSs of female students	
	Σ	%	Σ	%
Message Abandonment	5	2.77	7	3.27
Topic Avoidance	5	2.77	5	2.33
Circumlocution	1	0.55	1	0.46
Approximation	6	3.33	5	2.33
Use of all purpose word	4	2.22	5	2.33
Word Coinage	2	1.11	2	0.93
Non-linguistic signal	5	2.77	19	8.87
Literal Translation	23	12.7	8	3.73
Foreignizing	-	-	-	-
Code Switching	27	15	36	16.82
Appeal for help	20	11.11	12	5.6
Using Fillers	82	45.5	114	53.2
Total	180	100	214	100
N	9		10	

In order to find out more about the effect of gender on communication strategies, ANOVA is then used to analyse it. ANOVA simply shows whether there is significant effect of gender on communication strategies. For the first calculation, the researcher calculates all types of Dörnyei's CSs typology. The researcher then calculates the significance of three types of Dörnyei's CSs typology (avoidance strategies, compensatory strategies and stalling strategies). The calculation is calculated by using SPSS 16. Besides reporting ANOVA, the calculation also reports the descriptive data of the communication strategies used by male and female students. The tables of ANOVA are shown as follows:

Table 3. The result of ANOVA in All types of CSs

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	F Crit.
Between Groups	9.284	1	9.284	.114	.740	4.45
Within Groups	1382.400	17	81.318			
Total	1391.684	18				

Table 4. The result of ANOVA in Avoidance strategies

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	F Crit.
Between Groups	.037	1	.037	.028	.868	4.45
Within Groups	22.489	17	1.323			
Total	22.526	18				

Table 5. The result of ANOVA in Compensatory strategies

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	F Crit.
Between Groups	4.529	1	4.529	.106	.749	4.45
Within Groups	727.156	17	42.774			
Total	731.684	18				

Table 6. The result of ANOVA in Stalling strategies

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	F Crit.
Between Groups	24.816	1	24.816	.738	.402	4.45
Within Groups	571.289	17	33.605			
Total	596.105	18				

From the result of all calculation of ANOVA, it can be seen that in all types of CSs, F ratio: .114, in avoidance strategies, F ratio: .028, in compensatory strategies, F ratio: .106, and in the stalling strategies F ratio: .738. Then F. Critical (F table) shows 4.45 as the result. It means that F value < F table, therefore it can be inferred that there is no significant effect of gender on communication strategies whether in overall CSs or in three types of CSs (avoidance strategies, compensatory strategies and stalling strategies).

The finding shows that both males and females use fillers most frequently. Fillers refer to a strategy in which the speakers gain time to think or fill the blank conversation. The example of fillers used by the participant can be seen as follow:

I : Can you tell me about your family?

AT: My family is *aaa* simple family...I have *aaa* not rich family. I close my...with my...with my mother but not too close with my...father. And I have *aaa* brothers...my brothers and *oo*...three...three years older than me. And I'm not too close with him.

I : Not close with him. Can you tell me why?

AT: *aaa...because we are...aaa... we are aaaa ...apa ya...ssh...gengsi...*

The existence of fillers used in the interview then brings the researcher to the consideration that it perhaps is an unconscious process. It may be caused by the habit of the participants in facing the problems in speaking. Its habit can be created from their inability to overcome difficulty in speaking in their beginning of learning English. The existence of the high number of fillers also means that the participants are not compensate for the linguistic deficiencies. Dörnyei (1995) states that stalling or time-gaining strategies are functionally different from the other strategies, because they are not actually used to compensate for any linguistic deficiencies but rather to gain time and to keep the communication channel open at times of difficulty. If it is compared to the result of the participants here which are ELT students, there is consideration that the participants do not compensate their deficiencies in linguistic, but they just need more time in order not to give up in expressing their idea. It is perhaps because they are ELT students. Simply, their activities in college which force them to use English have indirectly helped them to overcome the deficiencies in linguistic.

When message abandonment, topic avoidance, circumlocution, approximation, use of all purpose word, word coinage and code switching show almost similar numbers used by males and females, the strategies such as non linguistic signal, literal translation and appeal for help show the difference in numbers of usage. Male students use literal translation and appeal for help more frequently than female students. The example of literal translation used by male students can be seen as follows:

RO: Ok my family. My family is aaa the big family because in my family have four boys and two girls. And *the name boy number one*

AT: That's the...what is...the faculty is good but I feel I can't get aa lot of experience because...that is...because of me that *I lazy to study*.

Besides literal translation, male students also used appeal for help more than female students. The example of appeal for help used by male students is as follow:

AB: ...I am not come from the rich family, I just aaa...aa just aa average like...like...aa *biasa*. (using eye contact to ask help to the interviewer)

I : Simple.

This finding which shows that male students use literal translation and appeal for help more frequently than female students is different from the result of Hou's research (1998) and Wang's research (2008). Hou (1998) reports that the female learners used more asking for help when they are performing the task (identifying in English objects in five photos). However, the researcher here considers that it possibly can be caused by the task used. In Hou's research, the participants are asked to identify English objects in a photo. Unlike Hou's, this research here lets the participants to create their own idea and express the idea to the interviewer. Since the interviewer is also male, and it is the one who the participants know, it may make the male students not doubt to ask some words which are not understood to the interviewer. Therefore, the similar gender between male students and the interviewer may make the male students courageous to ask the interviewer when they find the difficult words.

Another study conducted by Wang (2008) is also different from the result of the research here. Wang (2008) states that female learners use literal translation more frequently. For this difference, the researcher assumes that the

characteristics of the learners affect it. While the interview, female students seem to be cooperative. It can be seen from their enthusiasm in answering the questions asked by the interviewer. Unlike female students, male students seem to answer the questions simple enough. This unenthusiastic then may bring them trying not to speak communicatively. Consequently, they may not think critically to answer the questions. It possibly makes them answer by just using their L1 and translate it into L2.

After discussing the literal translation and appeal for help which is used more frequently by male students, it is appropriate to discuss non linguistic signal used by females. The example of the non linguistic signal used by the female students in the interview can be seen as follow:

IPS: I can said that... aaa family as a happy family when aaa...they can what is...(gesturing hand)*berkumpul*. Aaa...like a meeting together and they can spend time for...aa...aa spend of their time (*using face expression*)just a moment maybe to talk...to talk to each other about what... aa what is...aaa how their life aa when they separated (*gesturing hand*), because...because my family just separated now, my father in Palembang and my...(gesturing hand)...yah you know.

The use of mime, gesture, facial expression and sound imitation is used in order to express emotions. Park (2007) states that certain emotions are expressed both linguistically, through what is said in response and paralinguistically, through features such as intonation, high pitch, pause, accent, nonverbal signs and gestures such as facial expression. From this statement, it can be said that females are expressive while they are expressing their idea since they try to express their emotions.

Some studies have explained that females are more expressive than males. One of them is Parkins (2012) who states that women are the more emotionally expressive gender in the realm of face-to-face communication. This statement indicates that when females face the face-to-face communication, they will be emotionally expressive. The research here uses interview. Interview then can be said as face-to-face communication. Consequently, it is not surprising that female students use non linguistic signal in order to express their emotional.

The result of ANOVA shows that there is no significant effect of gender on communication strategies usage, especially in the numbers of use. Besides there is no significant effect on overall strategies, the result of all calculation of ANOVA also shows that there is no significant on three types of CSs used by gender. Simply, both males and females do not affect the use of CSs on avoidance strategies, compensatory strategies and stalling strategies. It possibly makes consideration that communication strategies usage cannot be seen by just seeing the gender of learners.

CONCLUSIONS

Both male and female students use fillers most frequently since it can be caused by unconscious process and their status as ELT students. However, female students use non linguistic signal more frequently than males since it is caused by their expressiveness in talking so that they use non linguistic signal in order to show and express their emotions. Last, there is no significant effect of gender on communication strategies, especially in the number of use. Besides gender does not affect communication strategies in overall strategies, gender also does not

affect three types of strategies such as avoidance strategies, compensatory strategies and stalling strategies.

Finally, after investigating this study, teachers should try not to differentiate the ability of the students based on their gender especially in using the strategies in communication since there are other factors which affect more such as motivation. Since there are more aspects affecting communication strategies, it is possible for further research to investigate those other aspects. It is also possible for further research to investigate about the use of fillers in students' speaking activities deeper.

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