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### Communication Strategy of Korean EFL Learners

Minsung Kim

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**Communication Strategy of Korean EFL Learners**

by

Minsung Kim

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements\

For the Degree

Master of Arts in

English: Teaching English as a Second Language

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Thesis Committee:

James Robinson, Chairperson

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### **Abstract**

The research question of this study is ‘How do the Korean EFL learners in the U.S. perceive communication strategy?’ The communication strategy is the concept that can actually help learner to solve the problem when they encounter during communication. Since the research of communication strategy with Korean students didn’t get heavily attention. Therefore, communication strategy can be a way for Korean learner to improve their communication skill. The perception of communication strategy by Korean students will be figured out in this research. It is expected that the result of this research can give some implication to Korean students and teacher to develop their strategic competence.

For the data collection, in-person interview will be conducted in this research. The author will create an interview question which consist of five aspects: 1) Background of participant 2) preference of using communication strategy 3) using communication strategy based on different situation 4) learning experience of communication strategy 5) perception of communication. Participants will describe their own experience of using communication strategy. The data will be analyzed based on Brown’s taxonomy of communication strategy. Also the author will analyze the results to determine if any trends or patterns would emerge.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Since Hymes (1972) first proposed the concept of ‘Communicative Competence’, many researchers have put forward their ideas on communicative competence. They all agree communicative competence consists of several major sub-components though they differ slightly from one another with regard to different fields of research (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale, 1983; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurell, 1995; Savignon, 1972). One of the sub-components, ‘Strategic Competence’ is the ability to overcome the problems during communication although strategic competence received little attention in foreign language classrooms, the importance of developing this competence in learners has become increasingly recognized.

Similarly, Selinker (1972) firstly defines the concept of ‘Communication strategies’ in order to explain inter language. According to Selinker (1972), communication strategies are the strategies for learners to avoid breakdown in communication and to compensate for the deficiency in their L2 linguistic resource. Later on, a number of applied linguists devoted their attention to the analysis of communication strategies, conceptualizations, and classifications. Due to this analysis, some researchers tried to activate and suggest a way to develop strategic competence by using different kinds of communication strategies. (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). Communication strategy is also significantly important terminology in this paper because this study comes from the question, “How can L2 learners improve their communication competence in an effective way.” Therefore, in this study, Korean learners’ communication strategies will be analyzed to suggest an implication in order to improve communicative competence, especially strategic parts.

South Korea is one of the most enthusiastic countries toward English language education. English proficiency is essential for all Korean people to find good employment, improve social status, and gain admission to the top universities in Korea. For example, some young Koreans do not feel comfortable applying for jobs until they get at least 900 on their TOEIC, which is the most common test for English used by employers. Furthermore, some parents make their young kids go abroad to study English when they are very young. As you can see, it is obvious Korean students spend a lot of time and money studying English. However, when comparing the amount of money and effort spent on learning to English, there is major discrepancy especially in communication skills. One of the main reasons for this discrepancy can be related to the teaching method used (Kim 2001, p. 1).

According to the curriculum of English by the Ministry of Education, students are to learn English based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to improve their communicative competence. However, most teachers in Korea prefer to teach English by focusing on grammar and structure. Hyun Jung Kim (2001) studied the sixth and seventh curricula of South Korea (1997 and 2001), with specific attention to Primary School EFL instruction (3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades, ages 9-12), and found that while the curricula clearly states goals of implementing specific CLT practices, they fall short of providing examples and textbook materials on how to encourage communicative competence. For this reason, many teachers agree with using CLT in their classrooms in principle, but others disagree with certain practices such as learner-centered approaches, which give the students an opportunity to practice their communication skills. Furthermore, Seong Hee Choi (1999) points out that a major consideration for students is university entrance exams, which still place an emphasis on reading, grammar and



translation, rather than on communicative competence. Therefore, it is obvious that the teaching method for improving communicative competence is not effective in Korea.

In this situation, communication strategy can be a good way to overcome this problem and help students to develop their communication skills. Kitayama (1993) stated that Korean students lack communication skills because they do not have enough practice for their strategic competence. Therefore, he argued it is important to teach communication strategies for L2 language learners. Besides, there are several studies which have identified the relationship between communication strategies and the improvement in communicative competence in Korea (Lee, 2001; Park, 2005; Yoon, 2003) For example, Yoon (2003) reveals that students who practice communication strategies show progress on their communication skills in cognitive and affective ways. She stated communication strategies can help students to have more competence in speaking by solving problems during communication practice without receiving help (p. 116).

As above, many scholars acknowledge the positive effect of communication strategy. The study of communication strategy on language teaching has been welcomed and adopted in many parts of the world. However, while a great deal has been written on the theory and practice of communication strategy in the world, there have been comparatively few studies of communication strategy with Korean students. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to analyze the Korean EFL learners' communication strategies. The research question posed in this thesis is as following:

How do the Korean EFL learners in the U.S. perceive communication strategy?

Through this research question the researcher expects to investigate the viewpoint of Korean EFL learners toward communication strategy. Therefore, in this study those aspects which attain

special focus by the author include: 1) the preference of using CS 2) Their use of CS based on different contexts 3) their learning experience of CS 4) the general perspective of CS.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the previous research on strategic competence and communicative strategy. Since strategic competence was suggested by Hymes (1972) as one sub-component of communicative competence, various researchers elaborate on strategic competence. Among them, some researchers consider communication strategy as a good way to improve learners' communication skills. The core of this research is to figure out the way to improve communicative competence for Second language learners by focusing on communication strategy. Thus, in this paper communicative competence especially strategic competence is activated by communication strategy. The first part of this chapter reviews the background, definition and classification of strategic competence. The second part examines the communication strategy by focusing on the various definitions and typologies. The final part focuses on the actual teaching situations of communication strategy in Korea.

### **Strategic Competence**

Strategic competence as it is commonly mentioned in the field of Second Language Acquisition, is an important terminology in this paper. Therefore, it has been represented emphatically in this chapter. First, the background of strategic competence is reviewed. Secondly, the communication strategies which are related to strategic competence are identified.

**Communicative competence.** This strategic competence is a sub-component of communicative competence. According to Komorowska (2002), "strategic competence is an indispensable component of a communicative competence" (p. 10). Therefore, it is important to understand strategic competence based on communicative competence. Communicative competence was discussed by Hymes (1972) who reacted to Chomsky's (1965) theory of competence which argued a fundamental distinction between competence and performance.

Hymes (1972) proposed the term communicative competence to represent not only the use of language in a social context, but also the observance of appropriate sociolinguistic norms. Besides, Savignon (1972) defines that “communicative competence is the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers and to make meaning” (p. 8). From the different definitions of communicative competence, the theory by Canale and Swain (1980) is widely accepted. According to Canale and Swain (1980) via McNamara (1996), communicative competence is interpreted in different way from Hymes (1972). Canale and Swain (1980) regard ability as a part of communicative performance, since it includes factors such as volition, motivation, and pathology. Furthermore, Canale and Swain (1980) explain communicative competence as a whole in terms of three components’ competencies: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. They consider grammatical competence as knowledge which includes language code (grammar rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, etc.). Also, they argue that sociolinguistic consist of two sets of rules. One is sociocultural rule which can be regarded as a way of using language properly, and the other is the rule of discourse (Canale & Swain 1980, p. 30). The rule of discourse involves the combining of language structures to produce unified text in different moods further elaborated by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995).

**Definition of strategic competence.** Strategic competence is the term which is first defined by Canale and Swain (1980). Canal and Swain define that strategic competence as the ability to solve problems when communication doesn’t go well. They refer to strategic competence in following way:

This component will be made up of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variable or to insufficient competence. Such strategies will be of two main

types: those that relate primarily to grammatical competence (e.g. how to paraphrase grammatical forms that one has not mastered or cannot recall momentarily and those that related more to sociolinguistic competence (e.g. various role-playing strategies. How to address strangers when unsure of their social status). (pp. 30-31)

Later, Canale (1983) developed the definition of strategic competence by including both the compensatory characteristic of communication strategies and the enhancement characteristic of production strategies:

Strategic competence: mastery of verbal and nonverbal strategies both (a) to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to insufficient competence or to performance limitation and (b) to enhance rhetorical effort of utterances. (p. 339)

Other than the definition by Canal and Swain, various linguists have extended the definition of strategic competence (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1991, p. 17; Duquette, 1988). Among them, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991), point out that strategic competence is important for both L1 and L2 learners, but it is more important for L2 learners because of the situation facings students who have difficulty in communication.

Strategic competence is relevant to both L1 and L2, since communication breakdowns occur and must be overcome not only in a foreign language but in one's mother tongue as well. However, since strategic competence involves strategies to be used when communication is difficult, it is of crucial importance for foreign language learners. A lack of strategic competence may account for situations when students with a firm knowledge of grammar and a wide range of vocabulary get stuck and are unable to carry out their communicative intent. (p. 17)

**Classification of strategic competence.** In a research project at the University of California, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) conceptualized strategic competence in relation to knowledge of communication strategy. This is because communication strategy is described most explicitly, and they consider this strategy to be communicative language use. In their pedagogically oriented framework, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) describe five categories of strategic competence:

- (a) Avoidance or reduction strategies: tailoring one's message to one's resources by either replacing messages, avoiding topics, or as an extreme case, abandoning one's message altogether.
- (b) Achievement or compensatory strategies: manipulating available language to reach a communicative goal and this may entail compensating for linguistic deficiencies.
- (c) Stalling or time-gaining strategies: fillers, hesitation devices and gambits as well as repetitions
- (d) Self-monitoring strategies: correcting or changing something in one's own speech (self-repair) as well as rephrasing (and often overelaborating) one's message to further ensure that it gets through.
- (e) Interactional strategies: highlighting the cooperative aspect of strategy use. (p. 27)

These categories are further broken down into subcategories listed in Table 1 with examples.

Table 1

*Suggested Components of Strategic Competence* (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p. 28)

---

**AVOIDANCE or REDUCTION STRATEGIES**

- Message replacement
- Topic avoidance
- Message abandonment

---

**ACHIEVEMENT or COMPENSATORY STRATEGIES**

- Circumlocution
- Approximation
- All-purpose words
- Non-linguistic means
- Restructuring
- Word-coinage
- Literal translation from L1
- Foreignizing
- Code-switching
- Retrieval

---

**STALLING or TIME-GAINING STRATEGIES**

- Fillers, hesitation devices and gambits
- Self and other—repetition

---

**SELF-MONITORING STRATEGIES**

- Self-initiated repair
- Self-rephrasing

---

**INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES**

- Appeals for help
  - direct
  - indirect
  - Meaning negotiation strategies
  - *Indicators of non/mis-understanding*
  - Requests
  - Repetition requests
  - Clarification requests
  - Confirmation requests
  - Expressions of non-understanding
  - Verbal
  - Non-verbal
  - Interpretive summary
  - *Responses*
  - Repetition, rephrasing, expansion, reduction, confirmation, rejection, repair
  - *Comprehension checks*
  - Whether the interlocutor can follow you
  - Whether you said was correct or grammatical
  - Whether the interlocutor is listening
  - Whether the interlocutor can hear you
- 

**Communication Strategy**

The term, “communication strategy” was first proposed by Selinker (1972). Numerous researchers have studied the subject of strategic competence as well as communication strategy. This is because both strategic competence and communication strategy are based on communicative language usage, so strategic competence can be activated by communication strategy. In this research, strategic competence will be examined in terms of communication strategy.

As above, communication strategy first was defined by Selinker (1972) in a theory to understand the processes involved in interlanguage. Selinker (1972) lists five factors which directly affect the output of an interlanguage system: language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of second language learning, strategies of second language communication, and overgeneralization of final language rules. According to Selinker (1972), communication strategy is an identifiable approach by learners to communicate with a native speaker. However, his definition has a limit because he fails to draw a clear boundary line between connotation and denotation of communication strategy.

Tarone (1980) considers communication strategy to be an interactional phenomena, and she states that communication strategy is a “mutual attempt between two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situation where requisite meaning structure are not shared” (Tarone, 1980, p. 420). Like this, she holds that the main characteristic of communication strategy is negotiation of an agreement on meaning. She argues that communication strategy is utilized to compensate for the blank between learners’ native language and the target language. Tarone (1980) attempts to divide communication strategy based on interaction, which is her fundamental goal in defining communication strategy. Tarone’s taxonomy for communication strategy, which is shown in Table 2, provides a solid foundation for future research.



Table 2

*Taron's Typology of Communication Strategies* (Taron, 1980, p. 429)

---

### **Paraphrase**

Approximation: use of a single target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the speaker (e.g., “pipe” for “water pipe”).

Word coinage: The learner makes up a new word in order to communicate a desired concept (e.g., “air ball” for “balloon”).

Circumlocution: The learner describes the characteristics or elements of the object or action instead of using the appropriate TL structure (“She is, uh, smoking something. I don’t know what is its name. That’s uh, Persian and we use in Turkey, a lot of”).

### **Transfer**

Literal translation: The learner translates word for word from the native language (e.g., “He invites him to drink” for “They toast one another”).

Language switch: The learner uses the LN term without bothering to translate (e.g., clapping one’s hands to illustrate applause).

### **Appeal for assistance**

The learner asks for the correct term or structure (e.g., “What’s is this?”).

### **Mime**

The learner uses nonverbal strategies in place of a meaning structure (e.g., clapping one’s hands to illustrate applause).

### **Avoidance**

Topic avoidance: The learner simply does not talk about concepts of which the vocabulary or other meaning structure is not known.

Message abandonment: The learner begins to talk about a concept but is unable to continue due to lack of meaning structure, and stops in mid-utterance.

---

Faerch and Kasper (1983) explained communication strategy based on a psycholinguistic approach. Their research includes a planning process to define communication strategy. Faerch and Kasper-define communication strategy as “potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal” (p. 81). They further define the term by dividing communication strategy into reduction strategies and

achievement strategies. There are two types of reduction strategies: a) former reduction and b) functional reduction. Achievement strategies are categorized into: a) compensatory strategy and b) retrieval strategy. Table 3 shows examples of each category.

Table 3

*Faerch and Kasper's Typology of Communication Strategies* (Faerch & Kasper, 1983, p. 81)

---

**A. Reduction Strategies**

1. Formal reduction strategies

Avoidance of L2 rules of which the learner is not certain or which cannot be accessed

2. Functional reduction strategies

Avoidance of certain speech acts,  
Avoidance or abandoning certain topics

**B. Achievement Strategies**

1. Compensatory strategies

a. Non-cooperative strategies

1) L1/L3 based

- code-switching
- inter/intra-lingual transfer
- interlingual transfer

2) IL-based

- substitution
- paraphrase
- word-coinage
- restructuring

3) Non-linguistic

e.g., mime/gesture

b. Cooperative strategies

- direct appeal
- indirect appeal

2. Retrieval strategies

a. Waiting

b. Using semantic field

c. Using other languages

---

Dörnyei and Scott (1997) suggest an extended taxonomy of communication strategy, which classifies them in terms of problem management. Their research considers how communication strategy contributes to resolving conflict and leads to mutual understanding. They categorize communication strategy into three broad areas: a) direct strategies b) interactional strategies c) indirect strategies. These three principal categories are defined in the following terms:

- a) Direct strategies-an alternative, manageable and self-contained means of getting the (sometimes modified) meaning across
- b) Indirect strategies-not strictly problem-solving devices.
- c) Interactional strategies-a third approach, whereby participants carry out troubleshooting exchanges cooperatively. (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997, p. 198)

Each of these three areas are further subcategorized in Table 4.

Table 4

*Dörnyei and Scott's Typology of Communication Strategies* (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997, p. 58)

---

## **1. DIRECT STRATEGIES**

### Resource deficit-related strategies

- Message abandonment
- Message reduction
- Message replacement
- Circumlocution
- Approximation
- Use of all-purpose words
- Word-coinage
- Restructuring
- Literal translation
- Foreignizing
- Code switching

### Own-performance problem-related strategies

- Self-rephrasing
- Self-repair
- Other-performance problem-related strategies
- Other-repair

## 2. INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES

### Resource deficit-related strategies

- Appeals for help
- Own-performance problem-related strategies
- Comprehension check
- Own-accuracy check
- Other-performance problem-related strategies
- Asking for repetition
- Asking for clarification
- Asking for confirmation
- Guessing
- Expressing nonunderstanding
- Interpretive summary
- Responses

## 3. INDIRECT STRATEGIES

### Processing time present-related strategies

- Use of fillers
- Repetitions

### Own-performance problem-related strategies

- verbal strategy markers

### Other –performance problem-related strategies

- Foreigning understanding

Brown (2000) provides further research on communication strategy (Table 5). He states: “perhaps the best way to understand what is meant by communication strategy is to look at a typical list of such strategies” (Brown, 2000, p. 150). Therefore, he offers taxonomy that reflects accepted categories over several decades of research (adapted from Dörnyei & Scott, 1997, p. 58).

Table 5

*Brown's Typology of Communication Strategies* (Brown, 2000, p. 150)

---

### **AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES**

1. Message abandonment: leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties
  2. Topic avoidance: avoiding topic areas or concepts that pose language difficulties
- 

### **COMPENSATORY STRATEGIES**

3. Circumlocution: describing or exemplifying the target object of action (e.g., the thing you open bottles with for corkscrews)
  4. Approximation: using an alternative term which expressing the meaning of target lexical item as closely as possible
  5. 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, tingie)
  6. Word coinage: creating a nonexisting L2 word based on a supposed rule (e.g., vegetarianist for vegetarian).
  7. Prefabricated patterns: using memorized stock phrases, usually for "survival purpose" (e.g., where is \_\_\_\_\_ or comment allez-vous? Where the morphological are not known to the learner)
  8. Nonlinguistic signals: Mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation
  9. Literal translation: translating literally a lexical item, idiom, compound word or structure from L1 to L2
  10. Foreignizing: Using a L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonology (i.e., with L2 pronunciation) and /or morphology (e.g., adding to it a L2 suffix)
  11. Code-switching: Using a L1 word with L1 pronunciation or a L3 word with L3 pronunciation while speaking in L2
  12. 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)
  13. 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)
- 

### **Communication Strategy in Korea**

Recently, the South Korean Education Department announced a change in the English portion of the Korean SAT, one of the most important exams for Korean students to enter

universities. The education department recognized that within the former exam system, students have limits to improve communicative competence. This change represents the importance of communicative competence in Korea English education. Communication strategy has gained attention by Korean instructors as a way for developing communicative competence. In the following section, teaching of communication strategy in Korea will be described.

**Teaching communication strategy in Korea.** The use of textbooks is one of several important teaching methods for English teachers in Korea. Textbooks allow teachers to achieve the national level curriculum by providing them with the material children are expected to learn at each level of their education. Even though communication strategy is specified in the national curriculum, some scholars point out that most English textbooks still neglect the aspect of communication strategy (Hong, 2009; Park, 2005; Uhm, 2006; Yoon, 2003).

Uhm (2006) agrees that English textbooks don't include the various examples of communication strategy. He analyzed English textbooks at the senior high school level from different publishers and found that 10 out of 15 textbooks contain the communication strategies such as the following: use of fillers, repetition, direct appeal for help, asking repetition, asking for clarification, comprehension check, and rephrasing. Uhm points out that each textbook contained only a few communication strategies among the above. Although the most common communication strategy is 'use of filler', Uhm (2006) stated that if an "L2 user use this strategy too much, then it could make the communication awkward, so it doesn't help to improve communicative competence" (p. 290).

Similarly, Park (2005) and Hong (2009) examined English textbooks for junior year high school students. Park (2005) analyzed thirteen different textbooks. She recognized that eight of them included communication strategy, while the others did not. She considers the lack of

various communication strategies and activities a limit to students, which would otherwise allow students to practice them. Hong (2009) look through five different textbooks for eighth grade students. He also concluded that those textbooks did not include various examples for practice. For example, each activity in his textbook sample consisted of several conversations which include few communication strategies, and for this activity, students should repeat the conversation by replacing a simple word in the conversation.

Compared to the teaching of communication strategy in secondary school, the teaching of communication strategy in elementary school receives less attention by researchers. Even though communication strategy is indicated in the present curriculum for elementary English education, the activities to train communication strategy can have limits to developing communicative competence (Lee, 2001, p. 103). Yoon (2003) reveals the several challenges when students practice communication strategy. First, some students use an expression which can be understood between people in the same culture. For example, for an activity practicing communication strategy, students have to explain the Cheongwadea (the Korean president's place of residence). During the activity, a student described it as the house of Park, who was a previous president of Korea. In a second example, students give a list of words to attain their goal. For example, when students explained the meaning of "injection," a student said "hospital" twice while mimicking the action of receiving an injection. According to Yoon (2003), this can happen more frequently between low level English learners. She also proposes that the activity can fail when the proficiency level between interlocutors is too different. Furthermore, she explains that in this case "each student can become stressed and at the end, they give up the communication" (Yoon, 2003, p. 118).

### Chapter III: Methodology

#### Participants

Ten Korean international students currently studying at Saint Cloud State University served as participants in this study. Their major and grade level range from freshman to graduate students. Participants with at least one semester of study in the U.S. were chosen to provide established experience of using communication strategies in the United States. The participants were gathered through personal contacts of the author from the Korean Student Association and local Korean church.

Table 6

#### *Characteristics of Participants*

Characteristic	Subcategory	Number
Gender	Female	7
	Male	3
Age	Undergraduate	7
	Graduate	3
Major	Education	3
	Engineering	4
	Politics	2
	Business	1
Length of time have studied in US	Less than 2 years	4
	More than 2 years	6

#### Instrument

The method of data collection was in-person interviews with the international Korean participants. The interviews were conducted over a period of two months between November and December of 2018. The interviews were 27 questions long and were divided into five different



sections. The first section of the questionnaire was designed to gather background information from the participants. Questions two through eight asked about participants' demographic background such as gender, major, age etc. The next section was designed to elicit information about the participants' preference of communication strategies. This section asked for the five most preferred communication strategies from the Brown's taxonomy (Table 5) and examples of using such communication strategies. The third section asked the participants to share their communication strategies based on different contexts. Referring to Table 5, the author found if participants prefer to use avoidance strategies or compensatory strategies, according to Brown (2000). The author divided context into six different situations regarding the relationship between interviewer and interlocutor. Each relationship considered two factors: social status and social environment. Social status was divided into equal or high based on age and authority. The author divided social environment into three different categories focusing on function for action: social, education, and transaction. Table 7 shows examples of each category. The following section asked participants to share their learning experiences of communication strategies. The final section asked the participants to share their perceptions or thoughts regarding communication strategies.

To help participants' understanding of communication strategy, the author used Brown's taxonomy (Table 5). Brown (2000) divided communication strategy into avoidance strategy and compensatory strategy. According to Brown (2000) avoidance strategy categorized into two components: 1) message abandonment, and 2) topic avoidance. Compensatory strategy categorized into 11 components: 1) circumlocution, 2) approximation, 3) use of all purposed words, 4) word coinage, 5) prefabricated patterns, 6) nonlinguistic signals, 7) literal translation, 8) foreignizing, 9) code switching, 10) appeal for help, and 11) stalling or time gaining strategies.

Participants that completed an in-person interview were given a paper copy of the questions in both English and Korean. Since communication strategy has not been heavily researched by Koreans, the author developed the interview questions rather than using one from a previous research study.

Table 7

*Context of Communication*

<b>Social status</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Transaction</b>
High	Senior	Professor	DSO Supervisor
Equal	Friends	Classmate	Clerk, Staff

**Procedures**

The author began each in-person interview by giving the participant a paper copy of the informed consent form. Participants were asked to sign it before the interview began. While the interviews were conducted in English, the author did inform the participants that they could use Korean if necessary and that it would be translated. The participants also were provided a copy of the interview questions in both English and Korean to ensure clear understanding of the questions asked. For questions related to learners' preference, participants were given the list of communication strategies from Brown (2000). In this part, communication strategy was explained to help participants to understand the concept and categories of communication strategies.

The in-person interviews took place in mutually agreed upon locations. The interviews were conducted in library study rooms. The environment was quiet and conducive for in-depth conversations. Interview times ranged from 30 to 60 minutes. Conducting the interviews in study

rooms was beneficial with many practical issues, such as the need for data privacy and low traffic noise. The interviews were recorded using a personal digital recorder. The author also took notes on a laptop computer during the interview.

Before the interview started, the author gave a brief description of Brown's taxonomy (Table 5). Then, the author asked participants to read the taxonomy. If they had questions, the author explained more to make sure participants understood Brown's taxonomy.

All digital data was kept on the author's personal computer, which is password protected. The computer is always in the possession of the author or else in a location that is locked. All translations of the participants' answer were by one person. All related data remained in a secure location when not in the direct possession of the author. All data pertaining to the study was destroyed within five years after the completion of the research.

### **Analyzing Plan**

After transcribing the data, the author paid special attention to the participants' examples of their own personal experiences with communication strategy. The author classified the communication strategies from the examples of participants into sub-components. Furthermore, the author also categorized the participants' preferred communication strategy. It could the interviews allowed the author to analyze the tendency of Korean usage in using communication strategies.

The author analyzed the results based on Brown's (2000) framework. According to Brown (2000), the taxonomy by Dörnyei and Scott (1997) is too complicated to analyze communication strategies. This is because there is no clear boundary between each sub-component of communication strategies. Therefore, in this study, the taxonomy of communication strategies by Brown (2000) was used to classify the communication strategies of

Korean students. In addition, participants' communication strategies were analyzed by categorizing responses into avoidance strategies or compensatory strategies.

## **Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion**

The result of this study is presented in five parts. The first part describes the data about the preference of using communication without revealing the characteristics of the participants. Three communication strategies from Brown's taxonomy (Table 5) were sequentially ordered based on participants' preference. The second part, however, shows the analysis of participants' characteristics in relation to communication strategies. In the next section, the author tried to establish patterns of communication strategies affected by demographics such as gender, age, major etc. The third part describes the use of communication strategies depending on each different context using the question, "how do different contexts affect the use of communication strategy?" The fourth part described the personal experiences of learning communication strategies. The fifth part is about the Korean students' perspective of communication strategies. In this part, the author examined participants' opinion toward communication strategies and their general perceptions about English learning.

### **The Preference of Using Communication Strategy**

Participant's preference for communication was analyzed regardless of the identities such as gender, age, and the length of time students have studied in America. First, the most frequently used communication strategy by Korean students is circumlocution: describing or exemplifying the target object of action. Among the 10 participants, 8 students indicated that they usually use circumlocution. One of the participants, Lee, stated, "I use circumlocution so many times during conversation in English. If I don't remember the specific word, I try to explain it with examples." CH also said that he usually uses circumlocution when he works in the Mayor's office. He stated, "Three weeks ago, I had to update the machine for vote. At that

time, I did not know some words related to operating the machine, so I was trying to describe them with easy words that I already know.”

Another strategy frequently used by Korean students is nonlinguistic signal: mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation. Seven Korean participants answered they prefer to use nonlinguistic signal when they encounter a failure during conversation in English. For example, Lee stated that she used nonlinguistic signal occasionally. She used it more often when she first arrived in America because she was less proficient in English as a means of communication. Most participants normally use mime or gesture to compensate for inadequacy when communicating. However, some students use facial expressions or sound as nonlinguistic signals. For instance, MI described her experience in the healthcare center when she faced difficulty explaining her problem in English. She said, “I change my accent and facial expression to express where and the extent to which I was sick.” In conclusion, Korean participants usually use non-linguistic signals when they don’t know how to say specific words.

Korean participants also use approximation: using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of target lexical term as closely as possible. Six Korean participants chose approximation for the question, “Choose 5 communication strategies on the table (Appendix C) you use most frequently.” Some participants felt that when they have to talk about their major field with technical or scientific words, they try to find a synonym which is much easier to say. Su stated that he uses the approximation strategy to explain academic words. He said, “When I have to talk about the topic related to my major, and I don’t remember some academic words, I try to find same words which has similar meaning for the original words.”

### **Use of Communication Strategy by Different Demographics**

In this section, communication strategies were analyzed based on participants' background information including age, gender, major and the amount of time that participants have been studying in the U.S. To do this, the author analyzed the participants' answers for question #12: "Pick five communication strategy you use frequently." The author analyzed the responses for patterns and trends in the data. The author found that the correlation between the communication strategies and identities was not strong enough to establish. The lack of clear discernable patterns may have been the result of the small sample size of participants.

**Gender and CS.** No definitive conclusion can be reached regarding the connection between gender and communication strategies. This may be due to a limited data pool of three male participants. However, there is one notable difference between the answers given by the male participants and the female participants. Out of three male participants, two answered that they sometimes use prefabricated patterns, such as using memorized stock phrases, usually for "survival purposes." None of the female students preferred this strategy in situations of language breakdown. Male participant CH stated, "When I talked with my friend, I have used some slang sentences which come from internet." Another male participant, Su, stated that he has watched YouTube and learned prefabricated patterns. He said:

I have watched YouTube videos which were uploaded by native speakers to show how to play video games, and I have enjoyed watching them. I could learn many useful prefabricated patterns from the video. By using the phrases from the videos in real conversation, I feel that I have some improvement in English.

**The amount of time and CS.** The length of time that the participants spent in America did not seem to strongly influence any of the results. The author divided the participants into two different groups. The first group consisted of four participants who have spent a year and a half

or less in the U.S. The second group consisted of six participants who have spent more than 2 years in America.

Two participants in the first group answered that sometimes they use message abandonment—leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties. Lee, a participant, stated that she became easily tired when she tried to explain new words to herself in English because of her low proficiency. Therefore, if she faces difficulty in explaining something new, she abandons her goal. Another participant, DB, who studied in America less than a year, also indicated use of message abandonment when she talks about unfamiliar topics such as politics, feminism, etc. For example, she said, “One time me and my roommate talked about why some people don’t like Trump, and I did not know many words related to politics, so I just said nothing to end the topic.” The responses in the first group also indicated use of topic avoidance as another avoidance strategy. YO, who has studied English for many years, stated that she typically uses topic avoidance when engaging in topics she is not familiar with. She provided an example. If someone asked her about North Korea, she would say “I don’t know” and change the topic because she does not know very much about North Korea. This response could indicate there may be several factors that affect the choice of avoidance strategies by participants. Even so, it is difficult to generalize that the participants who have studied in the US less than year and a half prefer to use avoidance strategies.

Another difference between the two groups is the use of code switching: using an L1 word with pronunciation or an L3 word with L3 pronunciation while speaking in L2. One participant in the first group answered that she has used code switching as a communication strategy. DB stated that sometimes she speaks Korean during conversations in English if the interlocutor’s comments force her out of her English skills comfort zone. The comments affect



her and she forgets what she is about to say. In that situation, she switches to Korean. In contrast, none of the second group participants use code switching. Therefore, in this case, the amount of time the participants have spent in America may affect their inclination to use codeswitching as a communication strategy.

**Major and communication strategy.** Four different majors are represented among the 10 participants: politics, engineering, education, and business. Three participants are in the education field and three participants are studying information systems. Two participants are studying international relations. The remaining two participants are in different majors—one is studying business and the other mechanical engineering. Similarly, as with the other two factors above, gender and amount of time, there is not a strong relationship between communication strategies and the participant's major because of the insufficient number of participants. However, there are a few noteworthy patterns that may warrant investigation in future research with access to a larger pool of participants.

First, while participants in different major groups recognized appeal for help as a strategy, all of the education majors claimed to use the strategy. For example, MI, whose major is education, stated that when she had difficulty keeping a conversation, she asked for help directly with a question such as “what do you say in this situation?” Other education majors also mentioned indirect appeals for help such as rising intonation, pausing, making eye contact, or showing a puzzled expression. For instance, YO stated that if she doesn't understand, she uses a puzzled expression to indirectly express that she needs help; the interlocutors are able to recognize the express and assist her. EK also stated that she frequently uses appeal for help when she talks with her friends. She described that during conversations with her close friends, if she cannot remember a specific word, she pauses and her friend is able to say some words for her.

Furthermore, MI stated that her close friends can help her by recognizing her mannerisms or behaviors that indicate she needs help. It seems that the participants who are studying education prefer to use appeal for help indirectly based on their examples.

Another distinctive trend in the data reveals that those whose majors involve math frequently rely on nonlinguistic signals. Participants who have studied in America more than 10 years but whose majors are not math-related answered that they do not use nonlinguistic signals. Out of seven participants who answered they often use nonlinguistic signals, three are majoring in engineering. Two of these three have also studied in America for more than 10 years. For example, TS is studying information systems. In his major, he works with computer programming, but he experiences a language barrier when he does not know technical word for programming, such as “C-qual.” For this reason, he relies on nonlinguistic signals to imitate the process of the programming. NR directly stated that the reason she uses nonlinguistic signal is related to her major. She said, “I have to deal with many engineering words which is hard to explain by paraphrasing. Therefore, if I have difficulty of it, I need to use body language.” These examples can be an evidence that the choice of major may impact the adoption of communication strategies.

### **Use of Communication Strategies According to Context**

In this section, the use of communication strategies was analyzed in different contexts. The author divided context into six different situations based on relationship between participants and interlocutors: older people, friend, professor, classmate, Designated School Official (DSO), and staff members of commercial establishments. The responses yielded various results. Therefore, it is hard to determine clear patterns or trends. Participants were allowed to choose more than one communication strategy or no response at all depending on their

experience. Because of inconsistent answers, it was difficult to determine a pattern in communication strategies used based on context. One noticeable result is that some participants show preference for specific communication strategies; however, when they were presented different contexts, their answer differed from their preference. This means that context can be a factor in deciding a communication strategy.

**Seniors and CS.** According to the data, participants preferred to rely on avoidance strategies when communicating with persons who are older than 55. Five of the participants answered that they use message abandonment, and another two chose topic avoidance. Some participants described conversations with seniors as not very important, so they tend to easily stop communication when they encounter problems. TS stated that “compared to other type of conversations, I don’t have specific goals to engage in the conversation topic, so if I don’t understand the interlocutor, I just try to move on to another topic.” MI also answered that she uses topic avoidance during communication with older people. She felt that the conversation is not as important as other conversations, so she feels obligated to choose a topic, making conversation difficult. She said, “I try to avoid a breakdown situation before it happens when I talk with old people.” Participants who choose avoidance strategies believe it is related to respect for old people based on Korean culture. Dan stated that she uses message abandonment because she often relies on an online translator if she has difficulty communicating. Using this tool is not always convenient when talking with old people. According to Dan, there are different communication manners between old people and friends. Using a translator in front of old people is considered rude behavior. For this reason, she responds to older people with ‘yes’ when she doesn’t know some words. CH also stated “I use message abandonment because their thoughts and opinions can be different from mine. I try to find common things and agree with their

opinion.” This cultural factor does not affect some participants who have studied more than 10 years in America. Na does not recognize a difference between befriending old people and people that are similar in age to her. She said, “I usually use circumlocution when I have difficulty when talking with elders because the age difference doesn’t affect my English. Though my interlocutor is older than I am, I talk in the same way I do with others.”

**Friends and CS.** The difference between communicating with elders and friends depends on how comfortable the participants feel in the conversation. Many participants feel that they are more comfortable when they talk with their friends. This psychological factor affects their choice of communication strategy. First, five of the participants answered that they use appeal for help, direct or indirect, if they have problems during the conversation with friends. Most participants stated that they don’t mind asking questions to their friends based on their close relationship. Na stated that when she talks with her friend she feels comfortable, so she can say whatever she wants. BH said “I usually make my friend say the words that I don’t know.” In this situation, her friend says several words to figure out Na’s intention; then, finally, they can select the correct word among the options. Three other students expressed that they depend on their friends to say the words. However, NR pointed out the limitation of the use of appeal for help in this way. NR said, “However, I think this strategy only works with my best friend who is really close to me, so she can notice my feeling and intention without words.”

Furthermore, in comparison with communication with elders, conversations between friends are more relaxed. This makes participants choose other communication strategies such as word coinage or nonlinguistic signals. Each male student answered that they use coinage and nonlinguistic signals when they encounter a language break down among friends. For example, TS stated that he can create nonexistent words because he feels free to make mistakes in front of

his friends. He said, "Sometimes I found that I said some correct words while I am using word coinage." Another participant, Su, stated that he uses nonlinguistic signals, especially mime, to make his friend laugh. He recalled a memory about his time living in the dorms. One day his roommate was playing a video game for which he uses fake guns. Su did not know the specific name for the type of gun in the game, so he mimicked the motion of using the gun. He succeeded in making his roommate understand and laugh. He said that the benefit of using nonlinguistic signal is not only helping him to overcome break down situations but it is also useful in creating friendships.

Participants also answered that they use avoidance strategies during the conversation with friends. Two students chose topic avoidance and one student chose message abandonment as a communication strategy. The personality traits of participants can affect the tendency of using communication strategies. One reason of using avoidance strategies might be related to their desire to talk. For example, BH stated that she only wants to talk about interesting topics for her. She described that she sometimes has language breakdown when she talks about the topics that are not of her interest. Therefore, she just responds with short answers such as "yes" or "ok" and tries to lead the conversation to other topics in which she can contribute and talk more. Sometimes the reason of using avoidance strategy might be related to personality for avoiding the argument. CH stated that he usually uses message abandonment by saying "never mind" when he has a breakdown in conversation. CH gave an example to illustrate that he used message abandonment during an argument with his friend:

Sometimes I feel my language breakdown on debate with my friends. One day, I and my friend could not agree on the menu for dinner. At that time, I did not know what to say, so I just gave up trying to change his mind. I had to stop the conversation, and let my friend pick the menu to avoid argument.

**Professor and CS.** Many participants answered that they talk to their professor with a specific purpose, mostly by asking questions. One major communication strategy that participants prefer to use, when they feel difficulty in communication with professor, is *stalling* or *time-gaining*, which is the use of fillers or hesitation devices to gain time to think. TS stated that he usually meets his advisor to discuss the difficulty of understanding the lecture or to get advice on future plans. For these reasons, he feels he has a strong purpose to speak with the professor. That is why he does not use avoidance strategy when he talks with professor. Instead, he refers to hesitation as a communication strategy. Another participant, LJ, also stated that if she cannot remember a specific word during a conversation, she says, “I am sorry can you wait for a while I cannot remember.” However, LJ also pointed out the limitation of time-gaining strategies—sometimes, the amount of time required to remember the word takes too long and the goal of hesitating can be lost.

Participants also prefer to use *appeal for help* in conversations with professors. SH stated that if she cannot understand a word the professor uses, she asks the professor to give a detailed explanation. It is important to note that some participants combine strategies to reach their goal effectively. For example, BH answered that she usually uses both *circumlocution* and *appeal for help* in an effort to overcome communication difficulty with a professor. She mentioned that she tries not to use an avoidance strategy when she is talking with a professor. First, she tries to make the professor understand her meaning by using circumlocution. If she fails, she asks for the professor’s help. However, BH also pointed out that conversations using those strategies are not always successful. She gave an example. In a conversation with her professor, she could not understand what the professor said. Her professor explained the meaning several times after she asked for help. She tried to paraphrase the professor’s explanation to check her understanding,

but it was not correct. She said, “I tried very hard to overcome the situation, but I could not make it, so at the end of the conversation I had to pretend to understand.” Another participant developed her own way to deal with communication breakdown. NR feels that language breakdowns are difficult for her to overcome because of her major, which mostly involves math formulas. Therefore, she needs to develop her own way to solve the problem effectively. She described her example of using both nonlinguistic signals and appeals for help:

Usually it is hard to explain my question in front of professor because most of my questions are about math, and I am not familiar with saying math words. So first, I try to make note to solve the math problem by myself, and I put the question mark on the note and then I bring the note to my professor to ask questions. After I visit office I just say, “I don’t know this part” by pointing out the question mark on the note with my index finger.

**Classmates in class and CS.** There is no noticeable pattern or tendency about the question related to classmates. It seems that participants choose each strategy depending on the situation in the classroom. Four participants, including three males, answered that they use appeal for help when they have difficulty communicating. They usually come across a breakdown when they cannot understand the words used in class. They try to ask their classmate for help. TS stated that a breakdown is usually related to understanding meaning. If he is in a large group discussion, TS will ask for an explanation after the class; otherwise, if the group is small, he would ask immediately. Su said, “Sometimes when I cannot understand the problem, I ask the classmate sitting next to me, and if he/she doesn’t know, I will ask other classmates.” Furthermore, some participants use appeal for help by using all-purpose words if they do not know specific words from class. For example, CH stated that he usually asks questions about the meaning of the word to his classmates by using the all-purpose word ‘something’ to make it clear. Some participants felt that it is important not to interrupt the class. For this reason, they use *topic avoidance*. For example, Su stated that during a lecture, his friend asked him a question,

but he did not know how to help his friend. To avoid interrupting the lecture, Su answered, “I don’t know. Let’s keep focusing on the lecture.” DB also stated that she encountered a language break down in a course discussion. During discussion, she experienced difficulty making her classmate understand her intention. DB felt that she spent too much time explaining, so she decided to move on to the next topic to follow the process in the class. The other communication strategy that some participants use in class is *nonlinguistic signal*. Some of them think it is useful when they give a speech or have a presentation in front of classmates. LJ stated, “Whenever I have break down during presentations, I use body language because it is an effective way to compensate my language, and also it is useful to relax the atmosphere.”

**DSO and CS.** There is no clear pattern when analyzing the participants’ use of communication strategy with people who have the power to make important decisions related to the participant’s international student status. Some participants achieve their goal by using any means of conversation with an authority figure, such as a boss or Designated School Official (DSO). For this reason, three of the participants answered that they use both *appeal for help* and *circumlocution* when they talk with authority figures. For example, MI stated that she uses *appeal for help* to navigate communication difficulties with her boss. She described her boss as a person who usually uses a lot of academic words. She said. “I cannot use any other options except appeal for help if I have language breakdown during a conversation with my boss because sometimes I literally cannot understand his language.” NR also shared her example of using *circumlocution* to overcome her difficulties in communicating with her boss. She stated that she cannot give up easily because it is her job, so she feels a lot of responsibility to communicate. Furthermore, she does not want to perform poorly, so she asks questions to prevent miscommunication. She also explained the weakness of using *circumlocution*. She felt that when



she tried to explain something by using circumlocution it led her to go off topic. Two other students use *stalling* or *time-gaining* for a similar reason. BH stated that she used fillers such as ‘well’ or ‘you know’ to gain time in the hopes of having a successful conversation with her DSO. On the other hand, some students prefer to avoid the communication breakdowns with authority figures in general by using the avoidance strategy. Four students answered that they use avoidance strategies; the reasoning varies from participant to participant. TS feels that if he asks for help at work, he does not appear professional. To avoid this, he pretends to understand and uses the internet to understand later. In a similar case, CH used message abandonment when he asked about Curricular Practical Training (CPT) at the Center for International Studies (CIS) office of St. Cloud State University. He described that if he lacks knowledge of complicated terminology, he easily feels a language breakdown coming. He did not know a lot about CPT at the time, so he failed to understand the explanation of CPT from CIS personnel. To deal with this situation, he had to leave the office and send an e-mail to them. He added that sometimes he prefers to send an email to ask questions because it allows him enough time to understand and respond. One participant answered that he uses nonlinguistic signal when experiencing a breakdown to keep a smooth mood in the conversation. CH stated, “I use body language with a smile when I have a problem talking with my boss then, I think my boss can be more understanding of the breakdown.” A communication breakdown about crucial topics with a person such as a DSO or a boss make participants use compensatory strategy. On the other hand, in similar situation participants tend to use avoidance strategy based on the situation or their personality.

**Staff and CS.** When analyzing the data about the communication strategy used with staff of commercial establishment, the participants said they used communication strategy depending

on where they are; whether they are at restaurants or stores. First, many participants answered that they use nonlinguistic signals when they have difficulty in restaurants. Five students answered that they have used gesture for ordering food in America. For example, EK stated that when she went to a very famous salad store in New York, and there were so many kinds of ingredients for salads which names she did not know. Therefore, she had to point out the ingredients that she wanted to be put on her salad bowl to order. CH also described his way to order food from the menu in a restaurant with nonlinguistic signals. He said, before I go to eat out in some restaurant, I usually go to the website first, and do some study about the menu. "All I need to do to order is pointing out the menu in the restaurant." Su shared his experience of the reason why he prefers to use nonlinguistic signals when he orders food in a restaurant:

When I just came to America, I went to the restaurant to eat a hamburger. In the restaurant, I intended to order the hamburger without tomato and mushroom, but I got exactly the opposite. After that day, I always order food and pick the ingredient with gestures.

On the other hand, some participants answered that they use appeal for help if they have problems during the conversation. BH stated that if the waiter said something, and she could not understand then she just asked the waiter to repeat one more time. LJ felt that she usually has problems to understand accents and speak with correct pronunciation. She said, "I use appeal for help because sometimes I don't know how to pronounce some words, so I ask them how to say them and try to learn from them." Some students shared their unsuccessful stories to overcome breakdown even though they used communication strategy. Two students stated that they use foreignizing to make interlocutors understand. LJ described that she tried to order some food, and the food also had the same name in Korean. Therefore, she tries to order the food with Korean accent, but the waiter could not understand. Similarly, CH also tried to order food, but he

did not know how to pronounce each of the ingredients, so he tried to say the name with his own accent. CH said, “I come from the city with the strongest accent in the Korean dialect, so when I tried to say some words which I did not know how to pronounce, usually it was not successful because of my strong accent.” He added that after all, he had to use body language. EK stated her example of using stalling or time gaining strategy. She said that while she was taking her time, she tried to remember words when she orders the food, but she could not make it. She felt that she did not have enough time to remember the word because the restaurant was busy and people are waiting for their turn, so the waiter did help her though she did not ask for help.

**Result.** Participants show various preferences for using communication strategies based on different contexts. Many participants prefer to use a nonlinguistic signal when they faced breakdown in the commercial place. For example, five of them shared their story about ordering the food by pointing out the menu in the restaurant. Since people can use order the food with the menu, this special circumlocution can affect the choice of the nonlinguistic signal. Besides, five participants answered that they use appeal for help to overcome their problem in conversation with friends. Most participants feel more comfortable when they are talking with their friends, so they are not afraid of asking questions. In this case, intimacy with the interlocutor could make the participant choose a specific communication strategy.

Participants think some conversations are more important than others, and this can affect the choice of communication strategy. For example, generally participants talk with their professors or DSO with a specific purpose such as asking questions. Therefore, they think that conversation with the professor or DSO are more important than other type of conversation. For this reason, three participants answered that they used appeal for help or circumlocution during conversation with the DSO, and five students answered that they used appeal for help or

circumlocution to overcome language breakdown with the professor. On the other hand, participants think the conversation with seniors is not as important compared to the professor or the DSO. Seven students answered that they used avoidance strategies such as message abandonment or topic avoidance.

Though different contexts can be a factor that affect participants communication strategy choice, there are other factors such as participants' personality or major that make them choose a specific communication strategy even in the same context. Some participants answered that sometimes they use avoidance strategies even if they think the conversation is important because they feel sorry for taking the interlocutors' time. For example, four participants answered they use avoidance strategies because of the language breakdown in conversation with the DSO. In conclusion, participants tend to choose different communication strategies based on the context. However, even in the same context, participants can show different preferences of communication strategies because of other factors, such as personality trait and major, having an impact on the choice of communication strategy.

Table 8

*Summary of Use Communication Strategies According to Context*

Context	CS #1	CS #2	CS #3
Senior	Message abandonment	Topic avoidance	Circumlocution
Friend	Appeal for help	Topic avoidance	Circumlocution
Professor	Circumlocution	Time gaining	Appeal for help Topic avoidance
Classmate	Appeal for help	Topic avoidance Use all purposed word Circumlocution	Nonlinguistic signal
DSO or boss	Circumlocution Approximation	Nonlinguistic signal Appeal for help Time gaining	Topic avoidance Message abandonment
Staff in commercial establishment	Nonlinguistic signal	Appeal for help	Approximation

**Learning Communication Strategies**

When analyzing the participants' learning experience about the communication strategies, more than half of the participants answered that they have heard about communication strategies before. Most of the participants learned about the communication strategies in the University. For example, MI whose major is education stated that she studied communication strategies in the curriculum class in Korea. Some students answered that they learned about communication strategies in Saint Cloud State University, not in Korea. Su said that he learned about communication strategies in the English 191 course. Though he did not study about the communication strategies in detail, he learned about some communication strategies such as eye contact and body language. On the other hand, some participants learned about communication strategies when they were in Korea. Two participants answered that they learned about the

communication strategies in a private education institution, Hagwon, in Korea. LJ described her experience of learning communication strategies in Hagwon:

Though I did not study all the communication strategies from this table, I learned some of them. My teacher in Hagwon stressed on the importance of using nonlinguistic signals and foreignizing to speak like native speakers. EK also stated that she has studied prefabricated patterns by using memorized stock phrases when she prepared for the TOEFL test writing section in Hagwon.

About the question of necessity of learning communication strategies, more than half of the participants agreed that EFL students need to learn communication strategies. Five students answered that communication strategies are useful to communicate in English for different reasons. BH thinks that even people who have studied English for a long time sometimes can experience breakdown, so it is useful to learn these strategies as communication skills to know how to handle breakdown when communicating with others. CH also agreed with this opinion because he thinks that it is important to have confidence during communication, and communication strategies can help students have more confidence in speaking English. Among the participants who think that students need to learn communication strategies, three of them answered that some communication strategies on the table (Appendix C) are important for Korean students to learn. TS thought that some strategies like appeal for help and circumlocution on the table might be useful to learn. Though he does not agree every strategy on the table is useful, he still agrees that some of them can help students to speak English better. LJ also thinks that it is not necessary to learn every strategy but to learn some of them could be better than nothing. She said, "If we know how to use some strategies before we talk to English speakers, then we can use English more effectively. This can help us to save time and effort to learn English in here." On the other hand, two participants answered that students don't need to learn communication strategies. MI considers that students can acquire communication strategies

naturally rather than learning them through explicit instruction. Furthermore, DB also stated that she has never heard about the communication strategies until now, but she has used some of them before. For this reason, she doesn't agree with teaching of communication strategies

When analyzing the question for choosing preferable communication strategy for EFL learners, participants tended to select communication strategies based on preference rather than on frequency of use. As a result, seven participants answered that EFL learners need to learn circumlocution. Six participants answered that it is useful to learn approximation for students. Two students selected prefabricated patterns to improve communication, and two other students answered that nonlinguistic signals are necessary to learn.

### **Perspective to Communication Strategies**

The participants shared their opinions toward the relationship between communication strategies and improvement in English proficiency. Eight out of 10 participants have positive perspectives about the idea that communication strategies can help to improve communication skills. Though, three participants think that only some communication strategies can help improving communication skills, the rest of the participants agreed that all the communication strategies can be useful to develop communication skills.

LJ stated that communication strategies are good for communication skills, however, in terms of improvement, she thinks that not all the strategies can result in the improvement of these skills. Instead, she thinks that making mistakes is really helpful to improve communication skills. From her point of view, EFL learners can learn from their mistakes during the conversation, and they can improve their communication skills in that way. As for communication strategies, she stated that among the strategies presented on the table (Appendix C) only circumlocution can bring improvement in communication skills. She said,

“Though I cannot remember every single word in English, I can still explain new things in my own words by using circumlocution.”

CH agreed that communication strategies can improve communication skills. This is because, if someone learns about each strategy, then he or she can apply the proper strategy accordingly to the situation and the interlocutor. He tried to give an example of this. He thinks that he tries to use different strategies depending on the people with whom he is talking. For example, one of his friends likes using body language, so he usually tries to use nonlinguistic signals first to overcome language breakdown. He said, “I know how to make him smile by using body language. If I have difficulty in communication, I try to use nonlinguistic signals.”

MI believed that communication strategies are not only good for the EFL learners but also for the people whose first language is English to improve their communication skills. She expressed that sometimes she has seen that people from the US also use communication strategies to compensate their language. Besides, she considers it can help people to keep talking, and in this way people can improve their fluency in communication.

NR agreed that only some communication strategies can improve communication skills because she thinks that strategies like message abandonment and topic avoidance are not helpful. Meanwhile, she said, “If I use any communication strategy, and it does work, my interlocutor will respond anyway. Then I can learn the correct word from the situation.” She explained her opinion by giving the following example:

If I don't know how to say specific word, I usually ask my friend by pointing out with my hand then my friend will say the best word in this situation. Therefore, I can learn and improve my English by this way.

She also felt that since she has used visual aid to overcome difficulty during conversation, communication strategy should include some kind of visual aid.



Su stated that it is important to try to use English though EFL learners have a lot of mistakes. Besides, he thought that to improve English skills, it is helpful to hang out with two different groups: the group that consists of international students, and the group that consists of native English speakers. Furthermore, he felt that for improvement, EFL learners should take the challenge of mistake during using English, so get out of the house, meet people, and talk in English. For this reason, he thought some communication strategies might help to improve communication skills. He stated that circumlocution, approximation, use of all-purpose words, word coinage, and prefabricated patterns are good to use because it is kind of effort to solve the problem by using English, so it can make the learner practice.

BH also stated that she does not think all the strategies on the table are useful, but if learners try to use the target language many times by using the communication strategies then it can help to improve language. On the contrary, one participant disagreed that communication strategies can improve communication skills. He stated, “Honestly, I don’t think it helps to improve communication skills. Though we don’t know these strategies we still can use them unconsciously. In contrast, sometimes we know the strategies, but we cannot always apply the strategies during conversation.” He also shared his way to improve English:

I have lived in America since I was in secondary school, and my English was not good at the first time. The one motivation for learning English was to win the argument with my friend. Therefore, I try to mimic others’ way of English such as expression, sounds to learn English. For example, I observed, and listened what kind of expression they use in specific situation, and I used in same way like them. As a result, I have learned many English sentences and expressions from my friends, and I know how to use English in different situation. I think learning English from situation is effective way to improve English.

However, he thought despite communication strategies cannot contribute improvement, it still can be useful for students to communicate in English.

## Chapter V : Conclusion

### Key Results

The current study has produced five major results. First, the most frequently used communication strategy by Korean participants is circumlocution. Among 10 Korean participants, 8 participants answered they frequently use circumlocution when they have difficulty in communication. In this case, they try to explain their expression by paraphrasing with more examples. The second most-often used communication strategy is nonlinguistic signals. Korean participants use not only mime and gestures but also facial and sound imitation to compensate their language. The third communication strategy which is usually used between participants is approximation. Some students use approximation when they ask question which they do not know the word related to the academic word. In conclusion, generally Korean participants, in this research, prefer to use compensatory strategy rather than avoidance strategy when they have language breakdown.

Second, there is no significant pattern or trend based on the demographics itself. It seems that the strong factors to choose communication strategies can be participant's personality or specific context rather than age, major or gender. In this point of view, participants who have strong purpose or goal in the conversation prefer to use compensatory strategies especially circumlocution, approximation, nonlinguistic signals, and stalling or time-gaining strategies for successful communication. Many participants felt the conversation with a professor or DSO is more important than other cases, and have strong motivation to complete communication successfully. On the other hand, sometimes participants tend to use avoidance strategies when they feel sorry about taking the interlocutor's time or they don't have confidence to complete the communication. For this reason, though they talk to a professor or DSO with a specific purpose,

they give up the communication. Also, participants answer sometimes they don't want to fight with others so they avoid the topic. To sum up, participant's identity does not affect the use of communication strategies individually. Different contexts might be stronger factors to affect participant's choice of communications strategies. Besides, if it is same situation, participants' personality and major can affect the use of communication strategies.

Third, some participants have their own way to overcome the problem during communication by using communication strategies in creative way or mixing each other. Participants, especially who have studied in America for a long time, have their own communication strategies. They know how to use it in an effective way depending on the topic, interlocutor or situation. For example, several students answered that they use mixed communication strategies on the table at the same time, and it is very useful. Several students use nonlinguistic signal such as a smile to release the tense not to compensate their language to help them ask question. Furthermore, some students suggested that using a dictionary or googling should be included in communication strategy theory because they frequently use it in real conversation.

Fourth, none of the students answered that they learned about communication strategies in public school from elementary to high school in Korea. However, some students answered that they have learned communication strategies when they were in Hagwon (private educational institution) or University. Furthermore, among the participants who have learned communication strategies before, most of them learn communication strategies partly as a way to help them to speak English better. For example, several participants answered that the instructor taught them nonlinguistic signal as an effort to speak like native speaker. The learning experience of communication strategies can affect their opinion about necessity of education communication

strategies. Five students agree with the question that students have to learn communication strategies. However, other students think that though students don't learn about it, they can use it naturally based on their own experience.

Fifth, nine participants agree that communication strategies can improve communication skill to some extent. Though not all the students above think the whole communication strategies on the table are useful, they agree at least some strategies are helpful for improvement. Most of them focus on the effort to keep going on conversation, and communication strategies can help to keep the conversation. They felt that by this way EFL learners can learn some sentences or words from the conversation. They think that it is not always absolutely helpful strategy but it is obvious that if the learner knows about some communication strategies, it is better than nothing because it will help anyway. In general, therefore, participants agree the positive potential in instruction of communication strategies.

### **Implication for Teacher**

Though this study did not determine that instruction of all communication strategies is necessary for EFL students, instruction of some communication strategies can be useful for students. An English instructor can conduct a survey of the student communication strategies to know the requirement from students of using communication strategies before they design the teaching plan. Otherwise, a teacher can provide instruction in those area of oral communication that their students are most lacking based on their observation. One important thing in teaching communication strategies is that a teacher should focus on teaching students in the use of the compensatory strategies, not avoidance strategies. While this may not make great impact on communication skill just one day, it will help to improve communication competency.

**Limitation of the Study**

The limitation of this study is the number of sample size. It is difficult to determine if the conclusions are significant based on a sample of only 10 participants. In addition, the sample size is not enough to figure out the correlation between communication strategy and factors. The first factor is gender. However, this study did not include enough data to make any assumptions or comparisons because the number of participants of gender is not equal. For similar reasons, time studied English in America did not appear to be significant in this study, but it could be different in future study. Therefore, it is suggested that further study need to take into consideration of the sample size, gender ratio, and length of time studying English in America of each participant.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Questions for the Korean Participants in English**

### 1. Informed Consent

- Agree or disagree
- If you have any questions or comments, please write them here.

### Background Information

Thank you for your participation. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. If you are unable to answer one question, or if it does not apply to you, leave the question blank. Please provide some background information. You may answer in either English or Korean.

2. What is your name?
3. What is your gender?
4. What is your age?
5. What is your college grade level?
6. What is your major or area of academic study?
7. When did you start studying English?
8. How long have you been studied English in U.S.?

### Preference of communication strategy

9. Have you ever experienced the break down situation during conversation in English?
10. Can you describe it with example?
11. Have you ever used this communication strategy in this classification? (See appendix C)
12. Which one use most frequently? Pick five by order
13. Can you give example of each of situation related to each of communication strategy

Experience of using communication strategy depending on different context

14. Think about a successful interaction in the US when you talked with a US person who was a student but someone who is older than you and you experienced a breakdown in communication, what kind of communication strategy did you usually use?

-can you describe it with example?

Think about an unsuccessful interaction in the US when you talked with a US person who was a student but someone who was older than you and you experienced a breakdown in communication, what kind of communication strategy did you usually use?

-can you describe it with example?

15. Think about a successful interaction in the US when you talk with your US friend and you experienced a breakdown in communication, what kind of communication strategy you usually use?

-can you describe it with example?

Think about an unsuccessful interaction in the US when you talked with your US friend and you experience the breakdown in communication, what kind of communication strategy you usually use?

-can you describe it with example?

16. Think about a successful interaction in the US when you talk with your US professor or teacher and you experience a breakdown in communication what kind of communication strategy you usually use?

-can you describe it with example?

17. Think about an unsuccessful interaction in the US when you talk with your US classmate and you experienced a breakdown in communication, what kind of communication strategy you usually use?

-can you describe it with example?

18. Think about a successful interaction in the US when you talked with a US person who work at the CIS office or another SCSU office and you experienced a breakdown in communication, what kind of communication strategy you usually use?

-can you describe it with example?

Think about an unsuccessful interaction in the US when you talked with a US person who work at the CIS office or another SCSU office and you experienced a breakdown in communication, what kind of communication strategy you usually use?

-can you describe it with example?

19. Think about an unsuccessful interaction in the US when you talk with the clerk to order sandwich shop or another shop and you experienced the breakdown in communication, what kind of communication strategy you usually use?

-can you describe it with example?

Think about a successful interaction in the US when you talk with the clerk to order sandwich shop or another shop and you experienced the breakdown in communication, what kind of communication strategy you usually use?

-can you describe it with example?

#### Learning communication strategies

20. Have you ever heard about communication strategies before?

21. Have you ever learned communication strategies in Korea?

22. If yes, can you describe?
23. Do you think Korean students should learn this for their communication skills?
24. Among the list which communication strategies should be taught to Korean students?
25. Is there anything else you want to share about the communication strategies? (e.g., advice, suggestion for English teacher or learners)

Perspective of communication strategies

26. Do you think communication strategies are helpful for improving communication skills?
27. If yes why?

## Appendix B: Interview Question for the Korean Participants

### 1. 서면 동의

- 동의한다/ 동의하지 않는다
- 만약 궁금한 점이나 언급할 사항이 있으면 여기에 적으시오.

### 배경정보

참여해 주셔서 감사합니다. 최선을 다하여 다음 질문에 답하여 주십시오. 질문에 답할 수 없거나, 당신에게 적용되지 않는 질문은 비워 두십시오. 몇 가지 배경정보를 기입해 주십시오. 영어 또는 한국어로 작성하십시오.

2. 당신의 이름은 무엇입니까?

3. 당신의 성별은 무엇입니까?

- 남성/여성

4. 나이가 어떻게 됩니까?

5. 몇 학년입니까??

6. 전공은 무엇입니까?

7. 언제 영어를 처음으로 시작했습니까?

8. 미국에서 영어를 공부한지는 얼마나 됩니까?

의사소통 전략 사용 선호도

9. 미국에서 영어로 의사소통을 하는데 어려움을 느낀 적이 있습니까?

10. 좀더 구체적으로 예를 들어 설명해 주세요

11. 다음 의사소통전략 표에 있는 의사소통 전략들을 사용해 본 경험이 있습니까?

12. 어떤 것들을 가장 많이 사용했습니까? 다섯 가지를 골라보시오

13. 고른 의사소통 전략들을 사용한 예를 들어주십시오

의사소통 전략을 사용하는 경향

14. 다음상황에서 미국에서 성공적인 의사소통경험을 생각해 보십시오 당신이

당신보다 나이가 많은 미국인 학생과 대화하던 중 의사소통 단절을 느꼈을 때 주로

어떤 의사소통 전략을 사용했나요?

-예를 들어 설명해 주십시오

같은 상황에서의 성공적이지 못했던 의사소통 경험을 생각해 보십시오

-예를 들어 설명해 주십시오

15. 다음상황에서 미국에서 성공적인 의사소통 경험을 생각해보십시오 당신이 미국인

친구와 대화하던 중 의사소통 단절을 느꼈을 때 주로 어떤 의사소통 전략을

사용했나요?

-예를 들어 설명해 주십시오

같은 상황에서의 성공적이지 못했던 의사소통 경험을 생각해 보십시오

-예를 들어 설명해 주십시오

16. 다음 상황에서 미국에서의 성공적인 의사소통 경험을 생각해보십시오 당신이

미국인 교수나 선생님과 이야기할 때 의사소통단절이 왔다면 주로 어떤 종류의

의사소통 전략을 사용했나요?

-예를 들어 설명해 주십시오

같은 상황에서 성공적이지 못했던 의사소통 경험을 생각해 보십시오

-예를 들어 설명해 주십시오

17. 다음 상황에서 미국에서의 성공적인 의사소통 경험을 생각해보십시오 당신이

미국인 친구와 대화하는 중 의사소통 단절을 느꼈다면 주로 어떤 종류의 의사소통

전략을 사용했나요?

-예시를 들어 설명해 주세요

같은 상황에서 성공적이지 못했던 의사소통 경험을 생각해 보십시오

-예를 들어 설명해 주십시오

18. 당신이 SCSU 의 CIS 에서 일하는 사람이나 또는 미국대학교의 사무실에서

근무하는 사람과 대화를 할 때 의사소통 단절이 왔다면 주로 어떤 종류의 의사소통

전략을 사용했나요?

-예시를 들어 설명해 주세요

같은 상황에서 성공적이지 못했던 의사소통 경험을 생각해 보십시오

-예를 들어 설명해 주십시오

19. 당신이 샌드위치를 주문할 때 의사소통 단절을 느꼈다면 주로 어떤 종류의

의사소통 전략을 사용했나요?

-예시를 들어 설명해 주세요

같은 상황에서 성공적이지 못했던 의사소통 경험을 생각해 보십시오

-예를 들어 설명해 주십시오



### 의사소통 전략 학습

20. 의사소통 전략에 대해 들어본 적이 있나요?
21. 한국에서 의사소통 전략을 학습한 적이 있나요?
22. 만약 있다면 구체적으로 설명해 주세요
23. 한국 학생들이 의사소통 전략을 학습해야 한다고 생각합니까?
24. 표에 있는 의사소통 전략 중 어떤 의사소통 전략을 학습해야 한다고 생각합니까?
25. 의사소통 전략학습에 대해 덧붙이거나 공유하고 싶은 내용이 있나요?

### 의사소통전략에 대한 관점

26. 의사소통전략이 영어 의사소통 실력을 향상 시킨다는 것에 동의하십니까?
27. 만약 그렇다면 이유는 무엇입니까?

### Appendix C: Table 5: Brown's Typology of Communication Strategies

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#### AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES

1. Message abandonment: leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties
  2. Topic avoidance: avoiding topic areas or concepts that pose language difficulties
- 

#### COMPENSATORY STRATEGIES

3. Circumlocution: describing or exemplifying the target object of action (e.g., the thing you open bottles with for corkscrews)
4. Approximation: using an alternative term which expressing the meaning of target lexical item as closely as possible
5. 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, tingie)
6. Word coinage: creating a nonexisting L2 word based on a supposed rule (e.g., vegetarianist for vegetarian).
7. Prefabricated patterns: using memorized stock phrases, usually for "survival purpose" (e.g., where is \_\_\_\_\_ or comment allez-vous? Where the morphological are not known to the learner)
8. Nonlinguistic signals: Mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation
9. Literal translation: translating literally a lexical item, idiom, compound word or structure from L1 to L2
10. Foreignizing: Using a L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonology (i.e., with L2 pronunciation) and /or morphology (e.g., adding to it a L2 suffix)
11. Code-switching: Using a L1 word with L1 pronunciation or a L3 word with L3 pronunciation while speaking in L2
12. 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)
13. 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)

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(Brown 2000, p. 150)

Appendix D: Table 5: Brown's Typology of Communication Strategies (Korean)

의사소통전략 (Brown 2000)

번호	전략의 유형	설명
1	Message Abandonment (메시지포기)	영어가 어려워서 말하다가 도중에 멈추는 것
2	Topic avoidance (주제 회피)	어려운 주제를 피하는 것
3	Circumlocution (우회표현하기)	영어 단어가 생각나지 않을 때 그 단어를 풀어서 설명하는 것
4	Approximation (비슷한 말)	말하고자 하는 단어와 가장 가까운 의미의 단어를 사용하는 것
5	Use of all purposed words(다용도표현)	특정 단어가 생각나지 않을 때 일반적인 말로 사용하기
6	Word coinage (새 단어 만들기)	단어를 만들어 사용하는 규칙을 사용하여 영어에 있지 않은 단어를 창조하기
7	Prefabricated patterns(정해진 표현 사용하기)	문법이나 단어를 모르지만 일상에서 사용하기 위해 외운 표현
8	Nonlinguistic signals (몸으로 표현하기)	몸짓 또는 얼굴 표정으로 설명하기
9	Literal translation (우리말 순으로 번역하기)	영어식 순서를 무시하고 우리말 순서대로 우리식 표현을 그대로 영어로 바꾸어 표현하기
10	Foreignizing (외국어화 시키기)	우리나라 단어를 영어처럼 발음하여 말하기
11	Code-switching (우리말 사용하기)	영어를 말하는 도중에 우리말을 사용하기
12	Appeal for help (도움 요청하기)	상대방에게 직접적 또는 간접적으로 도움 요청하기
13	Stalling or time gaining strategies (시간벌기)	말을 하는 도중에 생각이 나지 않을 때 시간을 벌기 위해 사용하는 표현

## Appendix E: IRB Approval Letter



720 4th

### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

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## IRB PROTOCOL

Email:

mkim2@stcloudstate.edu

### DETERMINATION:

**Exempt Review**

**Project Title:** Communicating Strategy of Korean EFL Students

**Advisor** James Robinson

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.]

-Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email [ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu) and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

**IRB Chair:**

Dr. Benjamin Wits  
Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis  
Department of Community Psychology, Counseling, and Family Therapy

**IRB Institutional Official:**

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan  
Interim Associate Provost for Research  
Dean of Graduate Studies

#: 1859 – 2379