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Communication Strategies in French Language Learning among Non-Native Adult Speakers

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study aimed to determine and categorize the type of Malaysian non-native speakers' communication strategies (CS) in learning French with regard to speaking skills. The study, which was based on Dornyei & Scott's (1997) model of communication strategy, utilized both a qualitative and a simple quantitative method of data collection. The subjects consisted of 2nd and 3rd year foreign language students from various programs at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). A total of 10 Malaysian students in the French language course participated in this study. The main instruments used were a speaking task prompt, an observation checklist, and an audio recording. The overall findings based on the observations and transcription of the audio recordings indicated that among the most frequently used communication strategies were the use of literal translation (26.4%), the use of all-purpose words (18.4%), topic abandonment (12.8%) and foreignizing from English (8.8%). The findings have resulted in a framework for foreign language instruction and materials design. It also suggested that further intensive research should be conducted to design and develop a communication strategies instruction framework which would lead to the development of a comprehensive framework for the incorporation of communication strategy in foreign language learning instruction, materials and tasks for Malaysian learners.

Keywords: Malaysian learners; non-native speakers; French language; communication strategies; oral presentation

INTRODUCTION

The term *communication strategies* (CSs) refers to any mechanism language learners use to overcome their linguistic difficulties while communicating in a foreign language with a reduced interlanguage system. The past researches in this area were mainly to classify and set the taxonomy for the specific types of strategies available (Tarone, 1977; Faerch & Kasper, 1983; Dörnyei & Scott, 1997) and to explain the use of the strategies among the foreign language speakers. Hazlina Abdul Halim *et al.* (2009), in their research on ‘Writing strategies among Malaysian students learning French as a foreign language’ discovered that literal translation was the most dominant strategy employed.

CSs play a major role in the language acquisition. Therefore, its incorporation in the learning process will allow the weaker learners to ‘develop a feeling of being able to do something with the language’ (Willems, 1987:352) and consequently will increase and strengthen their learning motivation. This exploratory study investigates the use of oral CSs among the French proficiency university students at Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Based on the purposes of the study, this research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of oral communication strategies do learners of French use during communication tasks?
2. What strategies the learners used the most and the least?

Literature Review

Selinker (1972) proposed the notion of “communication strategies” (CSs), which he defined as a by-product of a learner’s effort to express meaning in unprompted speech through a limited target language system. Since he first used the term, it has been the subject of much discussion but also of little consensus as to its correct definition. In early work, CSs was regarded as language learners’ problem-solving behavior in the process of the target language communication. Language learners employed CSs to compensate for their linguistic deficiencies in order to achieve a particular communicative goal. This kind of notion focuses on the language learners’ response to an imminent problem without taking into account the interlocutor’s support for its resolution. Hence, it is an intra-individual, psycholinguistic view that “locates CS in models of speech production or cognitive organization and processing” (Kasper & Kellerman, 1997: 2).

On the other hand, from the inter-individual interaction view, Tarone (1980:420) defined CSs as the ‘mutual attempts of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in a situation where the requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared’. Thus, CSs are utilized to bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the foreign language learner and that of the target language interlocutor in real communication situations (Tarone, 1981) so as to avoid communication disruptions.

Dörnyei (1995a) in his study discovered a focused communicative strategy instruction could contribute to the second language development. Based on Dörnyei & Scott’s (1995a, 1995b) taxonomy, CSs are divided into twelve kinds and three basic categories, which are direct,

indirect and interactional strategies. In their taxonomy of communication strategies (1997), some strategies underlined were message abandonment, topic avoidance, circumlocution, literal translation, foreignizing, approximation and the use of all-purpose words.

The study by Hazlina Abdul Halim *et al.* (2011c) explored the influence of the mother tongue and second language in the writing strategies of Malaysian learning French as foreign language class. A total of 50 subjects participated in this study after their 100 hours of learning French. The instrument used in the study was the writing task, consisted of a short essay of 10 to 15 sentences in French on their normal routine festive seasons, namely the Chinese New Year, Deepavali, Aidilfitri or Christmas. The study discovered that apart from restricted vocabulary, CSs were used by the subjects to further explain the elements in their culture that were not taught in the French class. Circumlocution was a strategy used in this research where the subjects had sufficient vocabulary but not specific vocabularies to express themselves in their writings.

The study by Mei & Nathalang (2009) reported on an investigation into the CSs used by non-English major students in China. These students were divided into high and low proficiency level. This study also revealed that high proficiency learners resorted to CSs more often than low proficiency learners but resorted to *avoidance* less often than low proficiency learners. In their study, they found that due to the fact that low proficiency learners have less confidence in using the English language, they used *mime* or switched to L1 (Chinese), though not often.

METHODOLOGY

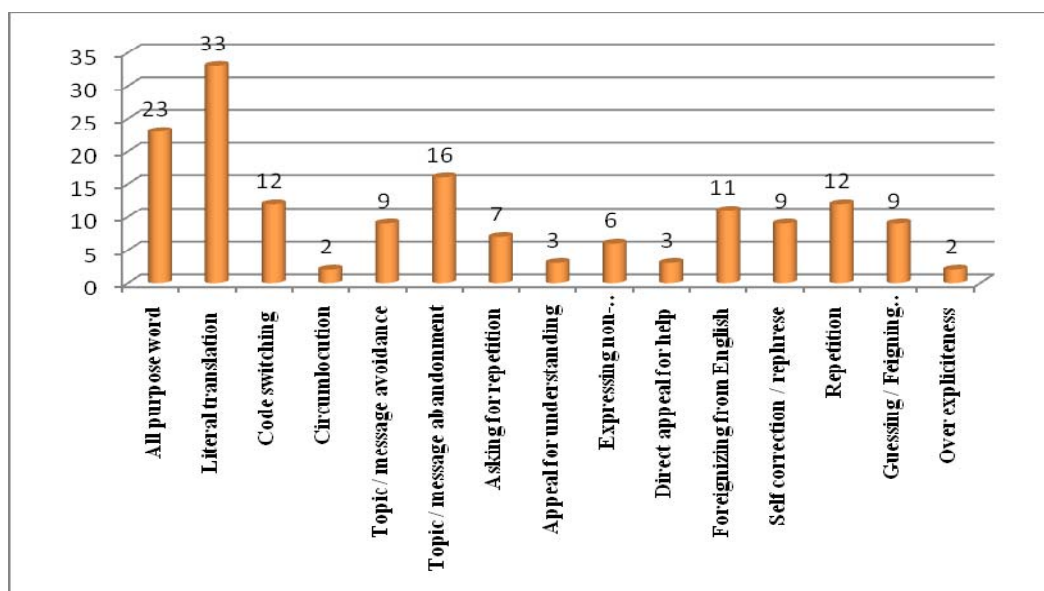
This exploratory study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The quantitative part involved a simple calculation of percentages for the CSs used, while the qualitative part involved the explanation of the strategies. The subjects consisted of 2nd and 3rd year foreign language students from different fields namely Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences at Universiti Putra Malaysia, with the age range of 23 to 24. A total of 10 respondents participated in this study after their 50 hours of learning French. Respondents were 5 males and 5 females. They were divided into 3 groups randomly and were asked to spontaneously participate in a 5-minutes conversation. The instrument used in the study was an oral task, guided by an oral prompt and an observation checklist.

The oral task was a dialogue whereby the respondents were asked to introduce themselves and later discussed about their daily activities. As the conversation involved the grammatical and conversational aspects learnt in the beginner's level, the respondents were assumed to have sufficient vocabulary and grammar to develop the dialogue especially after the 50 hours of French lessons. The method of analysis for the oral task was adapted from Dörnyei & Scott (1997) model of communication strategy. In their CS's taxonomy, some of the strategies underlined were message abandonment, topic avoidance, circumlocution, literal translation, foreignizing, approximation and using all purpose words. This taxonomy will be the base of this research. The dialogues for the three conversations were presented in the table form, as to better explain the CSs used in each sentence and the sequence of the CS, for the incomplete phrases or sentences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the oral presentations from the three groups, 125 elements of communicative strategies were used by the 10 subjects in the given task. The most dominant strategies used were the literal translation (26.4%), the use of all-purpose words (18.4%), topic abandonment (12.8%) and foreignizing from English (8.8%). Figure 1 shows the overall result:

Figure 1 Strategies employed by malaysian non-speakers of French



Results and discussion of communication strategies based on conversation from Group 1

From the conversation, it was found that the first group utilized 46 elements of communicative strategies. The analysis from the Group 1's conversation found that the most utilized strategies were literal translation (26.1%) all purpose words (17.4%) and topic abandonment (15.2%). Listed in Table 1 below are the transcripts, the strategies together with their explanations. The mark <> indicated the missing element in the conversation.

Table 1: Communicative strategies based on transcription from group 1
(Respondents: 3 females and 1 male (S4))

Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S1 : Bonjour, je suis XXX, je suis étudiante de la université UPM. Quel est votre nom ?	-	-
S2 : Je suis XX. Je suis étudiant de la UPM aussi	-	-

Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S3 : Bonjour, je m'appelle SSSS.	-	-
S4 : Bonjour, je m'appelle FFFFF, et j'ai 20 ans. Je suis de la Faculté de technologie. Et vous ?	use of all purpose word for subject pronoun	S4 did not differentiate the usage of <i>vous</i> (formal you) and <i>tu</i> (informal you). He generalized the usage.
S1 : Je <i>suis</i> 20 ans aussi. Vous avez quel age ?	Literal translation from English and the use of all purpose word for subject pronoun	S1 translated literally from English. In French to express your age, we use the verb <i>avoir</i> (to have), but S1 used the verb <i>être</i> (to be) as used in the English structure. S1 did not differentiate the usage of <i>vous</i> (formal you) and <i>tu</i> (informal you). She generalized the usage.
S2: J'ai 21 ans. Et vous?	Use of all purpose word for subject pronoun	S2 repeated the same error as S1 by generalizing the usage of <i>vous</i> (formal you) and <i>tu</i> (informal you).
S3 : J'ai 20 ans.		
S4 : J'habite à Ipoh, Perak. Et vous ?	Use of all purpose word for subject pronoun	S4 repeated the same error as S1 and S2 by generalizing the usage of <i>vous</i> (formal you) and <i>tu</i> (informal you).
S3 : J'habite à Subang Jaya.	-	-
S2 : Quelle est ton adresse ?	-	-
S1 : J'habite à Johor, en Malaisie et mon adresse est 1, rue Bentayen, un – zéro – deux – trois – trois – Johor. Et vous ?	Circumlocution/ Omission of preposition	S1 paraphrased the postal code by pronouncing them number by number literally instead of combining the numbers two by two as in French. She also omitted using preposition by foreignizing French using Malay structure, which allows dropping the preposition.
S2: J'habite à 22, la rue de Razak, à Ipoh.	Over explicitness	The over explicitness is due to the generalization of the rules in French.
S4: D'accord....	-	-
S2: Vous avez \sphericalangle frères or \sphericalangle sœurs ?	Literal translation from English, omission of article and code switching to English	S2 literally translated from English "You have brothers or sisters": in French, articles in front of nouns cannot be omitted.

Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S3: ? Pardon ?	Asking for repetition / expressing non-understanding	S3 expressed her incomprehension and requested directly for S2 to repeat the question
S2 : Vous avez \Leftrightarrow frère <i>or</i> \Leftrightarrow sœur ?	Repetition without any self correction, and code switching to English	S2 repeated the question and maintained the same structural errors
S1 : <i>Brothers or sisters</i> ?	Code switching to English	S1 code-switched to English to get the message through to S3
S4 : Oh... j'aime beaucoup la <i>lecture</i> et la musique.	Foreignizing from English	S4 built the sentence correctly but pronounced <i>lecture</i> as in English
S2 : Oh.. j'aime beaucoup faire du sport. Tennis et <i>badminton</i> ...	Foreignizing from English	S2 built the sentence correctly but pronounced <i>badminton</i> as in English
S1: Ah....	Feigning understanding	S1 feigned of having understood
S2: Et $\langle \rangle$ la musique, aller au cinéma et fais du shopping	Literal translation from Malay	In Malay, it is possible to combine the phrase structure with and without verbs, but not in French
S3: Moi aussi	-	-
S3: Je n'aime pas le <i>rock</i> musique	Structure literal translation from English	In French, most adjectives are after the noun. Here, S3 followed English structure: I don't like rock music.
S1: Je n'aime pas <i>le</i> musique rock, j'aime <i>la</i> musique classique, j'aime David Gladerman. Vous aimez <i>le</i> actor Brad Pitt ?	Generalization of le, la, l': translation from English.	S1 used English translation as well as generalization strategy (here: he realized the importance of the articles, but he didn't realized the <i>le, la</i> used has to be associated with the correct gender of the noun)
S2: Non, non...	-	-
S3: Moi aussi	Structure literal translation from Malay	In French, the correct expression following a negative form would be " <i>Moi non plus</i> ". Here, S3 followed Malay structure : <i>Saya juga / saya pun</i>
S2: <i>Ma</i> favorite actor est Jack Black	Generalization of possessive adjectives: mon, ma, mes. Code switching to English	S2 generalized the usage of possessive adjectives <i>mon ma & mes</i> (my in English and Malay have only one form). In French, possessive adjectives follow the gender of the nouns they refer to. S2 code switched to English for the word actor

Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S3: Mmm..Moi aussi.	Repetition	S3 volunteered the information by repeating the information given by S2 in short sentence.
S2: J'aime manger les pommes	Topic replacement	S2 started another topic.
S1: J'aime le poulet et les tomates. je n'aime pas <> banane	Omission of article, literal translation from Malay	S1 omitted using the article for <i>banane</i> , due to literal translation from Malay “ <i>Saya tak suka pisang</i> ”
S4: J'aime le jus d'orange.. <> pomme de terre, et vous ?	Omission of article, literal translation from Malay	S4 omitted using the article for <i>pomme de terre</i> , structure literally translated from Malay
S2: Je aime.... Je n'aime pas manger la salade	Message abandonment	S2 wanted to elaborate on what he likes, but left the message to replace it with what he doesn't like
S4: Quelle est votre <i>favourite</i> couleur ?	Foreignizing from English	S4 built the sentence correctly but pronounced <i>favourite</i> as in English
S1: J'aime le.. la.. le noir. Et vous	Hesitation and self correction on the article	S1 hesitated in association the gendered article to the color. She self-corrected by using the correct article.
S2: Je t'adore le vert et <> jaune.	Use of all purpose phrase & literal translation from English	S2 used the expression “je t'adore (I adore you)” that is a pre-made expression instead of using j'adore. He also omitted using the article for <i>jaune</i> , following English structure
S3: J'aime la rouge.	Generalization of article using translation from English	S3 used generalization strategy for <i>the</i> (in French, the is represented by <i>le, la, l'</i> or <i>les</i> according to the gender and plurality or singularity of the noun)
S4: J'aime la rouge et <> noir.	Repetition and omission of article using translation from English	S4 repeated the message but elaborated it. Still she omitted using the article <i>le, la, l'</i> or <i>les</i> because the structure is translated from English
S3 : J'ai un de frère et deux de sœurs	Structure literal translation from Chinese	S3 explained in French by using the Chinese structure. In French, <i>de</i> is not needed
S1: Quelle est votre <i>favorite</i> passe temps?	Foreignizing from English	S1 built the sentence correctly but pronounced <i>favorite</i> as in English
S3: J'aime la musique classique <i>beaucoup</i> . Et vous ?	Structure literal translation from English	In French, <i>beaucoup</i> should be after J'aime. S3 followed English structure: I like classical musique a lot .

Results and discussion of communication strategies based on conversation from Group 2

The analysis found that the second group utilized 30 elements of communicative strategies. The most dominant strategies used were literal translation (26.7%), code switching (16.6%) and topic avoidance (13.3%). Table 2 below is the transcript and the explanation of the strategies used by Group 2. The mark \triangleleft indicated the missing element in the conversation.

Table 2: Communicative strategies based on transcription from group 2
(Respondents: 2 males and 1 female (S1))

Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S1: Ça va ? Je m'appelle Aiven. J'ai 23 ans. J'habite à Penang, j'ai deux frères	-	-
S2: Oh... Ça va bien. Je m'appelle Lim.	-	-
S3: Je m'appelle An Soon.	-	-
S4: Bonjour, je m'appelle XXX. Je <i>suis</i> 22 ans	Literal translation from English	S1 translated literally from English to express her age in French. She is using the verb <i>être</i> (to be) as used in the English structure
S2: J'ai 22 ans	-	-
S3: J'ai 23... je suis content de J'habite à Penang, et vous	Message abandonment	S3 left saying his age and <i>je suis content de vous connaître</i> , fault of not having the vocabulary. He replaced the message by switching the topic.
S2: J'habite à Negeri Sembilan	-	-
S1: J'habite à Damansara.	-	-
S4: Ha ha ha	Feigning understanding	S4 pretended he understood by laughing.
S1: Et je \triangleleft le sport, la natation et le <i>badminton</i>	Omission of verb – verb avoidance. Foreignizing from English	S1 omitted using the verb in her sentence. S2 built the sentence correctly but pronounced <i>badminton</i> as in English
S2: Oh.. Ma <i>Hobby</i> est regarde la télévision	Code switching and literal translation from English.	S2 code switched to English by using the word hobby. He also used direct translation from English to formulate the phrase (in English: my hobby is watching the television. In French <i>mon passe-temps favori est de regarder la télévision</i>)

Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S3: Je suis au <i>cinema</i> et ... je lis moi-même... le cassette musique.	Generalization of the verb <i>être</i> and <i>aller</i> : all purpose words. Foreignizing from English. Feigning understanding in delivering the message	S3 generalized the usage of the verb <i>aller</i> and <i>être</i> . She also pronounced <i>cinema</i> as in English. S3 tried to express his understanding on the subject matter thus tried to say that he listened to music cassettes but he constructed the sentences in such a manner that it was incomprehensible.
S1: Vous faites du sport, du tennis ?	Topic avoidance	S1 changed the topic by asking another question.
S3: Ahh.. J'ai cinq <i>family members</i> et j'habite à Sunway.. Ma mère, <i>ma</i> père, et \leq deux sœurs, combien vous êtes <i>family members</i> ?	Topic avoidance. Code-switching to English. Generalization and omission of possessive adjectives : mon, ma, mes – literal translation from English/Malay. Literal translation in structure with generalization of the verb using the all purpose words	S3 avoided answering the question by presenting about his family. He code switched to English (for the term family members). S3 generalized the usage of possessive adjectives <i>mon ma & mes</i> (my in English and Malay has only one form). He omitted using possessive adjective in plural form. The sentence <i>combien vous êtes family members</i> was translated directly from Malay, and used the verb <i>être</i> excessively to say “saya ada/ I have”.
S2: J'ai cinq <i>family</i> .. j'ai cinq.....	Code-switching to English. Direct appeal for understanding	S2 code switched to English for the term family. He abandoned the message with a tone that directly appealed for comprehension from the others.
S1: J'ai deuz frères et trois sœurs. J'aime bien manger \leq <i>chocolate</i> ..et vous	Foreignizing from English and omission of article – literal translation from English	S1 pronounced <i>chocolat</i> as in English. She omitted using the article for <i>chocolat</i> due to literal translation from English
S3: J'aime <u>mange</u> la pomme, et vous	Litteral translation from Malay	S3 translated literally from Malay. In Malay, verbs are not conjugated according to the subject pronoun.
S2: Je aime le ... gâteau.....	-	-

Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S1: J'aime le gâteau, le nem. Ma <i>favorite</i> singer est Siti Norhaliza et mon <i>favorite acteur</i> est Jacky Chan	Code switching to English. Use of all purpose word due to literal translation from Malay & foreignizing from English	S1 code switched to the word <i>favorite</i> and <i>singer</i> in English. She also used the word <i>gâteau</i> to express delicacies as in Malay. S1 equally pronounced the word <i>acteur</i> as in English.
S2: Moi, J'aime Andy ...	Message abandonnement	-
S1: Tu as le numéro de téléphone ?	-	-
S3: C'est 0-1-6-5-7-30-7-0- 9-3. Quelle est ton adresse ?	Circumlocution	S3 paraphrased the postal code by pronouncing them number by number literally instead of combining the numbers two by two as in French.
S1: Et quelle est ton adresse ?	Message avoidance	S1 avoided saying her address by passing the question to the other two partners.
S3: Errr... 15 jalan melawati 6 taman melawati 75001 selangor	Code switching to English	S3 code switched to English to inform her postal code address.
S2: <i>Bu che tao</i> ... désolé ...	Code switching to Chinese	S2 code switched to Chinese to express his incapability of performing the address in French

Results and discussion of communication strategies based on conversation from Group 3

The analysis found that the third group utilized the most strategies, which were 81 elements of communicative strategies. The most dominant strategies used were literal translation (18.5%), the all purpose words (14.8%) and repetition (11.1%). Table 3 below is the transcript and the explanation of the strategies used by Group 3. The mark \triangleleft indicated the missing element in the conversation.

Table 3: Communicative strategies based on transcription from group 3
(respondents: 2 males and 1 female (S1))

Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S1: Bonjour monsieur	-	-
S2: Bonjour	-	-
S1: Vous vous appelez comment ?	-	-
S2: Pardon ?	Direct appeal for help	S2 requested directly for S1 to repeat the question

Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S1: Vous vous appelez comment ?	-	-
S2: Je m'appelle Ang Boon Yow	-	-
S1: Et vous?	-	-
S3: Je m'appelle Eric. Et vous ?	-	-
S1: Je m'appelle Alice	-	-
S3: Vous avez quel age ?	-	-
S1: Je <i>suis</i> 20 ans	Literal translation from English	S1 translated literally from English to express her age in French. She used the verb <i>être</i> (to be) as used in the English structure : I am 20 years old (French would say I have 20 years of age)
S2: 20 ans...et vous ?	-	-
S3: Je <i>suis</i> 21 ans. Et <i>toi</i> ?	Repetition. Literal translation from English	S3 repeated the strategy, and adapting from S1, he inserted his own information. Switch to <i>toi</i> (subject pronoun <i>tu</i> for second person singular and informal for French)
S2: J' <i>ai</i> 25 ans	Self correction	S2 elaborated by using the correct structure in French to express the age.
S3: Oooo...	Feigning understanding	-
S1: J'habite Kota Bharu. Et <i>tu</i> ?	Literal translation, use of all purpose word for stressed pronouns and subject pronoun	Here S1 generalized the usage of the word by translating into English. Since the translation for both <i>toi</i> and <i>tu</i> is "you", S1 generalized the pronoun <i>tu</i> (you) and use it as a stressed pronoun; she should have used <i>toi</i> (you) instead.
S2: J'habite est Pahang	Literal translation from English	S2 wanted to say "my house is in Pahang" which explains the usage of the verb <i>être</i> (to be) here. He should have just used the preposition <i>à</i> (in) instead.
S3: J'habite à Malacca. Qu'est-ce que <i>vous</i> faites dans la vie ?	use of all purpose word for subject pronoun	S3 did not differentiate the usage of <i>vous</i> (formal you) and <i>tu</i> (informal you). He generalized the usage.
S1: Hah?	Asking for repetition / expressing non-understanding	S1 expressed her incomprehension and requested directly for S2 to repeat the question

Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S3: Qu'est-ce que vous faites dans la vie ? Qu'est-ce que vous faites dans la vie ?	Other repetition...	S3 repeated his question twice to get the message through to S1.
S1: Je suis étudiante. Et vous?	-	-
S3: Je suis étudiant.	-	-
S2: moi étudiant aussi. Moi étudiant de la cours anglais. Et toi	Literal translation from Malay and English, use of all purpose word de la to express "of the"	S2 tried to elaborate but he used literal translation from Malay (translation: Me student too) which is acceptable in Malay. Second sentence: S2 used the same strategy, literal translation from Malay for structure (translation: me student from the English course) and for the grammar, S2 used English translation as well as generalization strategy (here : he used de la to say 'of the' without realising that cours is masculine, he should have used du).
S1: Je suis étudiante anglais aussi	Self rephrasing but literal translation from Malay	S1 tried to rephrase but she still used the translation from Malay (translation : I am student English too) for the structure. In French she should have added preposition en (in)
S2: Oo ... anglais aussi	Confirm but use of all purpose word	S2 confirmed his understanding of what was being said but still maintained the translation strategy by not using en
S3: Combien de personnes vous avez dans votre familé	Foreignizing from English	S3 tried to say famille in French but he pronounced the word using English pronunciation.
S2: Ahhh... s'il vous plait.. repetez s'il vous plait	Asking for repetition / expressing non-understanding	S2 expressed her incomprehension and requested directly for S3 to repeat the question
S3: Combien de personnes vous avez dans votre familé ?	Repetition, foreignizing from English	S3 repeated the question but still maintained the word famille by using English pronunciation.

	Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S2:	Combien personne...ahh.. mon mere... pere... mama, il s'appelle CCCC. mon pere, il s'appelle Ang BBBB. Il est <i>businessman</i>	Guessing... literal translation from English for <i>my</i> . Generalization of <i>il</i> for subject pronouns he and she (use of all purpose word). Code switch to English	S2 guessed by using keywords used in the question <i>Combien personne</i> (How many people). The strategy worked. S2 generalized the usage of possessif adjectives <i>mon</i> and <i>ma</i> (my in English and Malay have only one form) and the usage of third person singular <i>il</i> and <i>elle</i> from Malay (in Malay "he" and "she" have only one form). S2 equally code switched to English for the word "businessman"
S1:	Ma mere.. mon mere..ahh mon frere, ma sœur et ma..er.....	Message reduction	S1 abandoned the message, fault of not knowing the vocabulary to elaborate.
S2:	Vous avez votre petit..	Appeal for understanding	S2 indirectly appealed to S1 and S3 to understand what he was trying to say.
S1:	Hah ?	Asking for repetition / expressing non- understanding	S1 expressed her incomprehension and requested directly for S2 to repeat the question
S2:	Vous avez votre petit... désolé...désolé... moi désolé...	Self repair and message abandonment	S2 abandoned the message, fault of not knowing the vocabulary to elaborate.
S1:	J'aime la musique le rock	Message avoidance	S1 replaced the message with a new topic
S2:	Tu aimes la musique ?	Asking for confirmation/ repetition	S2 asked for confirmation for the new discussed topic
S1:	Et vous ?	Topic avoidance	S1 avoided the topic by asking the same question.
S2:	Je n'aime pas la musique. J'aime faire du velo. Oui, j'aime fait... mais...err.. et toi ?	Try to expand respond but message abandonment	S2 tried to elaborate the message he abandoned and returned the question to S3
S3:	Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S2:	Ohhh le nager... oui.. j'aime le nager aussi. Er... qu'est- ce que tu n'aimes pas ?	Feigning understanding, use of familiar sounded word and literal translation from	S2 expressed his comprehension and used the same strategy of translation from Malay

S3: qu'est que tu n'aimes pas ?	Malay Asking for repetition / expressing non- understanding	S3 expressed her incomprehension and requested directly for S2 to repeat the question
S2: qu'est que tu n'aimes pas ?		S2 repeated the question
S3: <i>What did you don't like ?</i>	Code switching	S3 code switched to English directly
S1: Je n'aime pas \Leftrightarrow sport..	literal translation from English	Abandon of article : translation from English (in French the use of article is compulsory but not in English)
S2: Vous <u>n'aime</u> pas <u>du</u> sport et ?	All purpose word for verb and article – generalization of the rule. Ask to expand	S2 generalized the conjugation of the verb <i>aimer</i> by using all-purpose conjugation. S2 also used the all purpose article 'to' in a negative form, though in French, exceptionally for the verb <i>aimer</i> , we use the definite article instead of partitive. S2 directly appealed S1 to elaborate her point.
S1: Et la sport.	All purpose word & Message abandonment	S1 used the all purpose word strategy by using the definite article 'la' excessively. S1 also cut short the conversation.
S3: Aimez-vous le fromage ?	Topic avoidance	S3 avoided the message, and changed to another topic.
S2: Le fromage oui...non...je n'aime pas le fromage. J'aime l'omelette du fromage. Je n'aime pas du fromage... je n'aime pas du fromage but j'aime l'omelette du fromage	Expand... over explicitness... message repetition	S2 tried to get the message across by expanding his explanation. Answered repeatedly to make sure the message was understood.
S1: J'aime les gâteaux... eh ! oui ! J'aime les gâteaux...	Self check to confirm the vocabulary	S1 self-checked her explanation to make sure the vocabulary in the explanation given was correct
S3: J'aime les gâteaux aussi..	Repetition	
S2: Ah ! question. Tu aimes le travail ?	Foreignizing from English	S3 used the noun <i>travail</i> which has quite a similar sound to travel in English. The correct verb in French is actually <i>voyager</i> . <i>Travail</i> in French means a work / job.
S3: Tu aimes le travail?	Asking for repetition / expressing non- understanding	S3 expressed his incomprehension and requested directly for S2 to repeat the question

Transcription	Strategy used	Explanation
S2: Travail... non voyager... désolé... voyager. J'aime le voyager. Vous travail en août ou	Self repair... Foreignizing from English. Use of familiar sounding word (a verb) to replace the noun. Appeal for understanding	S2 used the noun <i>travail</i> again, but then corrected himself and explained correctly. He then used the strategy of familiar sounding French word: here he used the <i>voyager</i> to replace <i>le voyage</i> (to travel to replace travelling). S3 directly appeal to S1 and S3 to understand what he was trying to say.
S1: Oui...oui...oui...	Feigning understanding	S1 feigned of having understood what S2 was trying to ask.
S2: Voyager. J'aime le voyager. Vous travail en août ou juillet ?	Foreignizing from english	S2 used the noun <i>travail</i> (a job)again what he really meant was <i>voyager</i> (to travel)
S2: Oh.. vous travaille pas. Et toi ?	Feigning understanding	S2 feigned of having comprehended what S3 tried to tell him but it was obvious he did not understand.
S1: Pardon ? Pardon ?	Asking for repetition	S1 expressed her incomprehension and requested directly for S2 to repeat the question
S2: Vous n'aimez pas le voyager ?	Self repair. Ask for confirmation	S2 corrected himself but he then used the strategy of familiar sounding French word : here he used the <i>voyager</i> to replace <i>le voyage</i>
S1: Oui...j'aime le voyager.	Repetition of errors :familiar sounding French word	S1 repeated the verb-noun error by S2 and reused the familiar sounding French word
S2: Où vous allez en <u>voyager</u> ?	Repetition of errors :f all purpose French word	S2 used the verb instead of noun
S1: Emm...	Topic abandonment	S1 left the topic
S3: Quelle est votre nationalité ?	Topic avoidance	S3 changed the topic to avoid having to elaborate it further.
S1: Je suis malaisienne..		
S3: Je suis malaisienne aussi... et toi ?	Response repeat	S3 used the response repetition strategy
S2: Je suis malaisienne aussi	Response repeat	S2 used the response repetition strategy

Overall findings

This study explored the oral strategies in the French beginners foreign language class. From the three conversations, the study revealed that even though the learners were given a simple beginner task with learnt vocabularies (in this case, a self presentation and introduction of friends), the learners still had the difficulties and sought a range of strategies to overcome their weakness in the French vocabulary. This is due to the fact that the dialogues were spontaneous, therefore, was limited in reforming the messages they wanted to convey as opposed to when they write. Literal translation from either English or Malay was the most dominant strategy, followed by all purpose words and message abandonment.

Apart from limited vocabulary, these strategies were used extensively on the grammatical and structure rules in French. The usage of the strategy was equally due to the unlearned and forgotten vocabularies of the subjects, and approximation of the vocabularies to the English words. The reason was because the words in French and English have the same spelling, thus the learners assumed that its meaning should be the same without further checking. The results of this study were parallel to the study on the written communication by Hazlina Abdul Halim *et al.* (2011) on the use of literal translation as the main strategy by French students.

In this study, the literal translation used involved the translating verbs literally from English, and the syntax from English, Malay or Chinese. The all-purpose words strategy, on the other hand, was used to generalize the use of article, subject *tu* and *vous* and possessive articles. Foreignizing from English was another strategy used by the learners, which involved the pronunciation of words as per English pronunciation. This was due to the similar orthography in English and French.

Parallel to the findings above, code switching was used by the learners for two reasons: they forgot certain vocabularies and switched to the language understood by all the audiences, and they tried to accommodate the French expressions which were not understood by the group members by switching to a language familiar to them. Finally, repetition strategy was used by the learners to overcome the uncertainties of what was being said by the group members, to gauge the group members' understanding of what was being discussed, to reassure him/herself of what was being discussed by the team members, and to compensate their lack of ideas to continue the conversation.

The results of the study are useful to French instructors: it indicated for oral tasks, the preparation time should be longer than written tasks, as the students will have to answer *in promptu*, whereas for written tasks, they were allowed moments of reflection. The instructors should equally be alerted to all the *faux-amis* in French and explain to their students the implications and the reasons of the wrong use of these *faux-amis* in French sentences, especially when the students start using literal translation as a CS.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this exploratory study, which adapted the Communication Strategies Taxonomy from Dörnyei and Scott (1997), aims to find the types of strategies used by beginner French learners in their oral communication. This exploratory study about oral strategies is useful for both learners and teachers of French as a foreign language in Malaysia. As a result of this preliminary study, learners can acquire a richer understanding of the language; and a later study can help identify which strategies the learners find the most and the least useful.

Similarly, this study is beneficial for curriculum development teachers as it will be able to help them identify which point and the reason learners utilize certain strategies and forego the others. It is hoped that this exploratory study on oral strategies can lead to a series of deeper researches in order to help students use and practice French in their daily lives.

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