How Students Participate in Discussions in a Facebook Group

Mr. P S S K Sarma, Dr. R. Rambabu, Mr. Ch. Gopi

Associate Professor, Professor & HOD, Assistant Professor

Department of Computer Science & Engineering,

Rajamahendri Institute of Engineering & Technology, Rajamahendravaram.

Abstract

This study focuses on how students employ communication strategies (CS) in Facebook groups to augment their restricted language repertoire and enhance their online conversational abilities. Using a purposive sample technique, twenty-eight individuals were selected from a public university communication course. Ten students were selected at random to take part in the study in order to do a comprehensive investigation of the occurrences inside the instance. Information was gathered through threaded OLD, interviews, reflecting journals, and retrospective sessions. The theme analysis demonstrates the variety of CS strategies that students used to finish the challenge. Direct, interactive, digital media, and paralinguistic techniques were some of these tactics.

Keywords:

Facebook groups, language learners, and strategies for effective communication 1.

Introduction

Due to language barriers, interpersonal connections can be especially difficult for second-language learners. Learning word choice is crucial for second language learners because it gives them more freedom to express themselves in spoken communication. Some students could try to make up for their lack of TL understanding by making their speech more emphasised. Nonetheless, some people can discover that using a different mode of expression enables them to accomplish their communication goals. This type of deliberate activity is commonly referred to as communication strategies (CS). Numerous different kinds of remote interactions are now feasible thanks to computers, mobile phones, and other electronic communication devices. The usage of Internet 2.0 sites by young people has skyrocketed in the last few years, notably Twitter. Because they allow for so many different kinds of communication between students, faculty, and staff, these technologies have become more important to today's college students. Both Nakatsuka (2009) and Lockyer and Patterson (2008) point out that, despite initial resistance and scepticism, some language teachers have begun to investigate and use social networking strategies to enhance their instruction and the language acquisition of their students. Few details regarding how ESL students use Facebook groups to incorporate computer science into an old language (OLD) are known, despite the growing body of literature on Facebook's educational uses (Bozzetto More 2012, Mellor&Hadid 2012, Selwyn 2009). Especially in Malaysian schools, there is a dearth of research on how pupils utilise digital CS. Research on the use of CS is very important since it is the method that students use to make up for and overcome their language deficit and achieve their

communication goals. Having access to information on how other students handled comparable circumstances will help students overcome their own language barriers and make better use of what they already know. Considering that virtual discourse, while resembling or combining writing and speaking, may have its own distinct characteristics, studying students' Facebook CS might shed light on the challenges they have in in-person interactions. Therefore, this article aims to provide insight into how college-level language learners use CS to make up for their language deficiencies and improve their OLD within the context of a Facebook-based group assignment for information sharing.

Review of the Published Works

 Students with a smaller vocabulary often look to computer science as a means to expand their language abilities and overcome their language barriers. These abilities are grouped along with "Strategic competence" in both the communicative competence model put forward by Bachman (1990) and the communicative competence framework put forth by Canali and Swain (1980), suggesting that they are a part of communicative competence. This skill pertains to the ability to use different approaches and ways to overcome obstacles in communication or to improve the effectiveness of communication via tactics. The concept of communicative strategies in second language (L2) communication was first proposed by Slinker (1972), who also believed that it was a crucial step in second language acquisition (SLA). Different people have different ideas on what computer science is, hence many different definitions have been proposed. At its core, CS is what Tirone (1980: 420) calls "a mutual endeavor of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in contexts when required meaning structures do not appear to be shared." So, CSs are considered to be phenomena that occur between people, with a focus on how the two sides try to convey a shared meaning. However, according to the psycholinguistic view, CS is all about the mind and is very introspective. An person's "possibly conscious intentions for fixing what to an individual presents itself as a challenge in obtaining a specific communicative objective" best describe CS, say Fierce and Kasper (1983:36). People who are learning a language but are unable to communicate with others may turn to CS for help. Dorney and Scott (1995, 1995a referenced in 1997: 179) expanded the scope of CS by include "any possibly purposeful effort to deal with any language-related challenge of which the speaker is aware throughout the cause of communication." The most all-encompassing view of CS, as opposed to the methodologies discussed before, is that put forward by Canali (1983). Computing isn't only about addressing problems; it encompasses any approach that "enhances the efficacy of communication" (Canali 1983:11). Dorney and Scott's (1997) taxonomy incorporates the majority of the earlier taxonomies of CS found in the literature, including those of Bialystok (1983, 1990), Fierce and Kasper (1983a), Pariah (1985), Paulissen (1990), and Tirone (1977). The approach to problem management is included in the CS category of their comprehensive taxonomy of problem-solving approaches. There are mainly three types of techniques discussed: direct, indirect, and interactional. As Dorney and Scott (1997) put it, "alternative, controllable, and self-contained strategies of getting the (sometimes changed) meaning across" include direct approaches like circumlocution or approximation to bridge the lexical gap. On the flip side, indirect approaches aid in the transfer of meaning by laying the groundwork for mutual understanding; this includes the use of fillers and repetitions to prevent breakdowns and maintain the communication channel open. Interactional strategies, such requesting clarification or begging for help, may improve cooperative problem-solving interactions. The field of CS has been extensively studied in the field of second language learning and education for about thirty years. A large body of literature on second language acquisition (SLA) has concentrated on offline CS, specifically in face-to-face (FTF) oral output (Bialystok 1983; Chen 1990; Kanji 1996; Tirone 1980; Wanneroo 2003) and written work (Ali Akbari&Alvar 2009). The few research on virtual context in computer science (Chun 1994; Smith 2003) all took place in SCMC settings, where participants used the relevant technology for real-time communication (such chats or instant messaging). But since it's a platform where students may talk to one other, Facebook was selected for this study. As pointed out by Mohamed Amin and Ranjit, one has to approach the investigation of these spaces' speech or interactions in a different manner than one would approach the analysis of typical classroom interactions (2009:4).

Methodology

Here, a descriptive case study with a single location is used for the research. A total of twenty-eight students enrolled in a communication course at the National University of Malaysia were selected using a purposeful
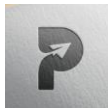
selection technique to ensure a representative sample. In this online information-sharing project, students and teachers used Facebook groups to discuss and debate topics that were either broad or more narrowly focused. Beauty and Health (BH), Technology in Education (TE), or Unusual Vacation (UV) were the three possible OLD themes that each team had to choose from. They then had to explain what they had learned with the other teams. Four or five individuals made up each of the six groups; BH1, BH2, TE1, TE2, UV1, and UV2 each had its own set of subjects. The participants' English proficiency ranged from non-user to intermediate, according to their results on the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). Only 17.9% of the total were Band 3 intermediate English users; the great majority were Band 1 and 2 learners (82.1%).

This whole group of students was enrolled in classes at one of the four faculties: education, business and economics, science and technology, or technology and information. We purposefully included students with varying degrees of proficiency in each group so that we could have fruitful debates. Within three weeks after starting the discussion, participants were asked to create a summary of the article, ask questions, and answer questions from their group members. They were also required to publish at least ten meaningful postings. The ALT, who is also a researcher, was in charge of the OLD. I was responsible for briefing students on the task's details, extending invitations to Facebook groups where they could discuss it, answering their queries, and even encouraging those who were on the sidelines to become involved. Ten students, including two men and eight girls, consented to participate as a sample for the case study so that researchers could learn more about the phenomenon. Students' reflective diaries, debriefing sessions, and semi-structured interviews provided the data. The participants were instructed to keep a journal in which they could quickly document their reactions to the OLD exercise as well as their experiences interacting with people online. We looked at the best three or four entries from each participant's journal. Debriefing meetings and semi-structured interviews were conducted immediately after the completion of the OLD assignment. Dorey and Scott's (1997) and Smith's (2003, with minor tweaks to accommodate new CS that emerged from the data) CS taxonomies were used in this investigation. The frequency of CS in the OLD was determined by a descriptive statistical investigation.

Conclusion and Analysis

Students employed a variety of CS strategies to solve the OLD issue, according to the findings. Although this research does address CS in general, it only covers the four most common types: direct, digital media, paralinguistic, and interactional. The frequency of each method's employment in the OLD and the subcategories of each approach are shown in Table 1. By emphasizing how often CS is in the OLD scripts, we can see how students typically utilize CS. Nevertheless, other types of CS were uncovered by a more thorough examination of ten individuals (P1-P10) using reflective diaries, semi-structured interviews, and retrospective observations.

Table 1. CS used by the learners in the OLD via FB Groups

Types of CS	Sub-categories	Frequency
Direct Strategies	Resource deficit-related strategies:	
	• Literal translation	536
	• Approximation	73
	• Code switching	9
	Own performance problem-related strategies:	
	• Self repair	4
	Other performance problem-related strategies:	
	• Other repair	2
Digital Media	Facebook Features:	
	• Like button	281
	• Tagging	227
	Hyperlinks	54
	Videos	10
	Pictures	8
Paralinguistic Strategies	Onomatopoeia	234
	Substitution	195
	Using Emoticons	159
	Capitalizing words for stress	85
	Punctuation	69
Interactional Strategies	Asking for clarification	7
	Appeals for help	4

Planned Actions

There are an alarming number of cases of literal translation in Table 1. Participants relied on their L1 to help them develop hypotheses and TL rules to compensate for their weaknesses in these areas, because most of them were less-capable ESL learners. As a literal translation, "thing that generate us health and beauty is what we converse about" comes from the group BH1 script. From the source language into the target language, she rendered it word-for-word. Respondents to in-depth interviews confessed to thinking in their L1 and speaking in their L2 utilizing
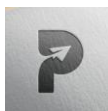
exact translations of words, phrases, and sentences. The fact that participant P4 claimed to have "really created the statement in Bahasa Malaya and translated word for word to English" shows that she used this strategy. The most common approximation CS is approximation, followed by interpolation. The participants had to be creative in order to compensate for their limited vocabulary. They had to come up with a term that was structurally similar to the target word but did not have the same meaning. For example, the individuals involved used the term "consumers" to describe "hotel visitors." Results from interviews and self-reflection also showed that individuals used more familiar, easier words and phrases when they were short on vocabulary. Using this strategy, P2 tries to simplify the statement by referring to everyday, basic concepts, as she writes in her reflective notebook. Students had to make do with any linguistic material they could get their hands on since the OLD task may take a while.

Digital tools

Additionally, the OLD made it quite evident that the participants relied heavily on digital media. There are five different kinds of digital media that the kids use, but Facebook features make up a large chunk of their time. Users' engagement with Facebook's distinctive "like" button is seen in Table 1. This demonstrates that you agree with the other members of the group and are appreciative of their input. Tagging members with their names was the second most prevalent practice. Anyone in the group may send out an email alert to get everyone's attention. Students also improved their group communication by making extensive use of internal linkages within their own contributions. Images and videos were also posted and shared in the OLD to elucidate and illustrate the topics discussed. In addition to the CS mentioned earlier that was part of the OLD, all ten participants said they used internet translators quite a bit. These translators might be software that you download or translations that are already incorporated onto websites. Chitchat (citcat.com), Language Translator Software (http://free-language-translator.en.softonic.com/), and Google Translate (translate.Google.com) seemed to be the most popular.

Paralinguistic Approaches

As seen in Table 1, the students heavily relied on paralinguistic strategies such as onomatopoeia, substitution, and emoticons while speaking OLD. To compensate for the absence of non-verbal cues such as intonation, tone, and facial expressions in a digital environment, symbolic representations and their textual counterparts were used (table 2). In FTF cultures, the use of onomatopoeia is more akin to how words are uttered. Users of Old typically abbreviate words and phrases to make typing more effective since the style is different from conversations. In an attempt to create a positive and supportive environment for the group's members, emoticons were used in lieu of users' genuine smiles and positive attitudes.

Table 2: Paralinguistic Strategies: Definitions and Examples

Paralinguistic Strategies	Description	Examples (data from the present study)
Onomatopoeia	Devices which take place of oral cues in FTF interaction	Woowww!; oohh...;hehehee...; ZZZzzz; hmm...
Substitution	The use of abbreviated forms of a word	before= b4; can u = cn u; as soon as possible= asap;laugh out loud= lol
Emoticons	The use of symbols to represent emotions	^_^ :) ♥♥ :P =D
Capitalized words for stress	Learners capitalize some words to show emphasis	TRULY innocent...; THANKS a lot...PEACE; WHY?
Punctuation	The use of excessive punctuation marks	!!!; ???

As can be seen in the OLD, all participants (except P7) ended their replies with emoticons, such smiling symbols. Data from interviews and retrospective sessions, however, demonstrated that this strategy was more often employed to express gratitude and respect for the efforts of their colleagues than to overcome linguistic obstacles. Using such a welcoming symbol and setting may encourage more members of the group to write from an emotional place. "To convey my glad attitude at that moment," "to know more about the issue addressed," and "to have Suria offer further explanation" were among P4's previous uses of emoticons.

Approaches to Communication

Students hardly ever used interactional methods in the previous scripts, such as asking their peers for clarification or assistance. A member of Group UV2 used the tactic "Could you tell me more about solitary vacation?" whereas a member of Group BH2 used the example "What is meant by lanolin?" Participants may review the posted messages from the OLD if needed to ensure they comprehended the information. It's difficult to get group members to write back when you need help or an explanation because the scripts are probably going to stay on the previous site. Strangely, they frequently looked for friends or acquaintances who were more fluent in a second language, even if their usage of this tactic was minimal and unreported in one sought for language assistance from friends or roommates until P10. P4 reflected on her experiences reaching out to people around her, including her English-speaking roommate, in her journal. Regardless of whether they used those sub-categories or not, every participant was discovered to employ a minimum of 6 CS throughout the 4 main categories. It was obvious that certain CS methods were more popular than others; these methods included direct translation, online translators, emoticons, brief and concise sentences, and calls for help. Using ten distinct CS categories, P4 and P6 explored a wide range of potential approaches to enhancing group dynamics. Regardless of their language proficiency, most individuals used a variety of CS, which reflects their own preferences and ways of communicating. Participant P10, who was just a modest user of her second language, overcame her communication barriers by relying on her existing linguistic system, rather than seeking assistance from her friends or roommates.

In summary

Students, according to the study's findings, utilize a wide range of CS to compensate for deficiencies in their linguistic competence. Nevertheless, alongside the existing types of CS in the literature, our study has also prompted several new CS. Access to Facebook and other online resources was made available to learners in Facebook groups for the elderly. Teachers of foreign languages would do well to help their students become more familiar with the many forms of computer science (CS) that are available to them in their online activities, with an emphasis on the resources made available by the most recent innovations in this field. In order to guarantee accurate translations, students need direction on how to utilize translation tools effectively. Improving students' communication skills could be a side effect of helping them become more competent strategists, as pointed out by Chen (1990) and Pariah (1985). Motivating creative use of second language skills could be as simple as enhancing one's mastery of computer science to compensate for one's language deficiencies. Since OLD helps students focus on form and meaning, more resources might be allocated to activities that improve learners' strategic competence, which could speed up and stimulate the development of second language skills.

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