CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3.0   Introduction

This chapter documents the research methodology employed in this study. It explains and describes the research design, the research procedures adopted and the methods of data analysis used.

3.1   Research Questions

The instruments used to collect data were selected based on the following questions.

i)   Which classes of strategic considerations **(SC)** are used by the debate teams during the tournaments? **(RQ1)**

ii)   What are the implications of using SC in a debate? **(RQ2)**

iii)   What is the frequency and function of each type of CS used during the debates? **(RQ3)**

iv)   What is the relationship between the frequency of CS employed and the outcome of the debate? **(RQ4)**

3.2 The Research Design

The study is divided into 3 stages. The first stage aims to identify the four classes of SC used to win the debates and all types of CS used during the three sessions of debates, essentially responding to all research questions. This will be done by means of reviewing video recordings of the preliminary and quarterfinals rounds of a PSD competition organized in conjunction with the district's 'Karnival Bahasa' (Language Carnival).

The second stage involves the administration of the semi-structured questionnaire to the participants as a means to find out personal background information, identify the individual's language of choice when communicating with various levels of community, gauge their awareness of communication strategies and finally, to study their preparation process before a debate to better understand the strategic considerations that are used during the debates by each team. This section may provide qualitative answers to research questions (ii), (iii) and (iv).

The third stage would be the unstructured interview with the trainers and also the observation notes made during the debate carnival and at the schools of the respective teams. The notes will be used to triangulate data from the first two stages.

Using the data compiled in all three stages, this researcher will attempt to explain the correlations between SC, CS and winning a debate. The researcher would also like to document how far debaters in

rural areas are rising up to the challenge of Parliamentary Style Debate, which is to speak and not 'regurgitate'.

3.2.1 The Sample

The video recordings of parliamentary style debates are used. They are listed as follows:-

	DEBATE TOPIC	TEAMS (ROUND/DURATION)
1	This House Believes That Academic Qualification Guarantees A Successful Future	3B vs **3Y** (PRELIMINARY / 00:45:28)
2	This House Believes That Academic Qualification Guarantees A Successful Future	3A vs **3Z** (PRELIMINARY / 00:39:30)
3	This House Believes That It Is Healthier To Prepare Your Own Meal Than Eat Out	**3Y** vs **3Z** (QUARTERFINALS / 00:49:33)

Table 2   Video Recordings of Parliamentary Style Debate

The aim of this research is to study the use of SC and CS during actual debate competition. Therefore, the recordings were done during a formal debate competition held in a district in rural Selangor. This is done to make sure that the condition under which the data was

collected was relatively identical. This is necessary to ensure that the data being analysed is of equal standard.

The researcher was unable to amass a larger sample pool due to the reluctance of the other 6 participating teams to be video taped despite being asked to participate in the study almost a fortnight before. They believed that they would embarrass both their school as well as themselves while citing the lack of proficiency in English and stage fright as the primary reasons.

The four teams that allowed their debates to be recorded did so only upon securing the promise of total anonymity. The researcher assured the participants, their teachers-in-charge, the organizers and the district language officer, both verbally and in black and white that the data collected would be solely for the purview of the researcher and her supervisor. Therefore the names of the teams have been relabeled to 3A, 3B, 3Y and 3Z. The researcher will be following team 3Y and 3Z.

Topics for the debate competition were selected by a panel of teachers in the district for the competition.

3.2.2 The Participants

Respondents for this study are a judgment sample. According to Wardhaugh (1992), a judgment sample is made up of participants selected according to a preferred criteria or a range of representatives

such as sub class, age, gender, occupation, education etc (as cited in Wray, Trott & Bloomer, 1988, p. 168).

The participants in this study consists of debaters from teams 3Y and 3Z, who received their education at rural Grade A schools (school enrolment above 1000) in Selangor. Each team, is made up of four debaters aged 17; three main or active debaters and one reserve. In both teams, the three mains speakers were the same throughout the debate.

The teachers-in-charge, who in this case double as trainers, are currently English Language teachers in their 30s. They have been involved, directly or indirectly, in parliamentary style debates for 5 (Team 3Y) and 8 (Team 3Z) years, respectively.

3.2.3   The Research Instruments

The data is gathered using three established and complementary research instruments; the video recording, the semi structured questionnaire and observation notes. The unstructured interview of the trainers will serve to triangulate what the participants have to say and what the researcher herself finds in her data.

3.2.3.1   The Video Recording

The researcher and research assistant are non participating observers responsible for the recording. Video recording has aided the

researcher in identifying the origins of the interjections or POI, facial expressions and the non verbal gestures employed during each debate. Plowman (2000) says that video is suitable for detailed analysis of language and interaction. Furthermore, video recording allows more time for the researcher to ponder and deliberate on the data before drawing conclusions, thus preventing misinterpretation of data.

3.2.3.2   The Semi structured questionnaire

The semi structured questionnaire is used to investigate whether the subjects are aware of the communication strategies for what they are, and the language preference of each subject when it comes to communicating with family members, peers, school teachers and debate teammates. Finally the questionnaire will also serve to analyse how trainer dependent each debate team is when it comes to competition and its implications on team performance.

3.2.3.3   The Observation Notes

The researcher kept note of what each team was like, the language of interaction of the debaters ad trainer and the language environment in each school.

3.2.3.4 The Unstructured Interview

Teachers in charge of the teams are colleagues who have been training teams in situations where the English Language is rarely or reluctantly used. The questions posed to them focused on students' attitude towards the language, training style, awareness and use of communication strategies and their perception of communication strategies in the scheme of it all.

3.3 The Research Procedure

The first stage of the study was to video record the debates. The video recording would be essential in identifying both the verbal and non verbal cues found in each debate.

In the second stage, the 8 participants, from team Y and Z, are required to answer a semi structured questionnaire consisting 4 parts and 36 questions.

The researcher is aware of research burnout therefore the questionnaire was only administrated 3 days after the competition. The duration allows the participants time to 'recover' from the debate competition and also to get them to respond before the 'heat of competition' wears off. In each school, the researcher was allowed the use of the resource centre. Respondents were made aware that there was no right or wrong answer. They were also allowed to respond in Bahasa Malaysia if they could not find the right word to express

themselves in English. To avoid copying and ensure genuine responses, they were made to sit a distance from each other.

Apart from obtaining data through video recording, observation and semi structured questionnaire, the researcher also held interviews to verify and validate the data already collected. Being informal, these interviews were unstructured in their design. The teachers-in-charge cum trainers of the four participating teams, being colleagues and friends of the researcher, participated in the informal chats. The researcher did not tape record these interviews but merely took notes. This was to ensure that the respondents were more comfortable with the interviewer. The questions were posed during the competition per se and also during the school visits.

3.4   Taxonomy Choice for Current Research.

A debate is largely a monologue except for parliamentary style debates where a dialogue may occur when a POI is offered.

When setting up the taxonomy, this researcher did it by means of deduction upon transcribing, listening and viewing the data. The researcher managed to identify incidents depicting potential communication breakdown and noted the recovery strategies.

All the strategies listed by Dörnyei (1995) and Celce Murcia et al (1995) are a wide range of communication enhancing devices. The lists take into account that CS may be used in a dialogue or monologue. The taxonomy used for this research would need to be able

to describe CS in both dialogue and monologue. After an analysis of the existing taxonomies, with its overlaps and extensions, the researcher came up with a compilation list, as done by Inozuka (2001), Faucette (2001) and Scattergood (2003).

When the list was compiled, the emphasis was to look at the CS in a positive way as all the CS utilized throughout the debates were aimed at getting the adjudicators to understand their case line and supporting arguments. Even in an instance when a message was abandoned in mid utterance, the debater would either change topic, restructure, circumlocute or use literal translation to try and sway the crowd support. In the event of a POI, comprehension checks, repetition of self as well as repetition of others and use of fillers occur when a dialogue between the debaters occurs.

Since one of the aims of this research is to identify the CS used during parliamentary style debates in a rural setting, the following taxonomy (APPENDIX H), which is modeled after Dörnyei's (1995) Compilation of Traditonal Conceptualizations, was set up based on taxonomies of Tarone (1981), as cited in Færch and Kasper (1983, p. 61 – 73), Brown, D (1994, p. 119); Færch and Kasper (1983) as cited in Færch and Kasper (1983, p. 21 – 60, 210 – 238); Celce Murcia, M, Dörnyei, Z and Thurrel, S (1995) as cited in Iozuka, A (2001); Dörnyei (1995) as cited in Dörnyei (1995), Faucette, P (2001) and Scattergood, E (2003) . (Also refer to section 4.4.2)

STRATEGY	CODE	SUB GROUP
AVOIDANCE /REDUCTION STRATEGIES	**1a**	Word
	1b	Topic/Message
ACHIEVEMENT/ COMPENSATORY STRATEGIES	**2**	Code Switching
	3	Circumlocution
	4	Approximation
	5	Word coinage
	6	Literal Translation
	7	Retrieval
STALLING/ GAINING STRATEGIES	**8**	Initiate Topic
	9	Repetition of Self
	10	Repetition of Others
	11	Use of fillers/pauses
SELF MONITORING STRATEGIES	**12**	Self Initiated Repair/ Reconstruct/Restructure
INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES	**13**	Comprehension Check
	14	Direct Appeal For Assistance
	15	Mime/Gesture (Non- Linguistic Appeal For Assistance)

TABLE 3   Taxonomy of Communication Strategies

The code listed in the table will be used to identify the different CS found in the data.

The first category is the Avoidance or Reduction Strategies. Merging basic principles of this strategy by Tarone (1981) and Færch

and Kasper (1983), the subgroups in this strategy are word or lexical avoidance (**1a**) and message abandonment (**1b**). This category involves an alteration, a reduction or complete abandonment of the intended message. However, this researcher looks at this strategy in a positive light as debaters are considered to be proactive in seeking other words or sentences to get the message across, therefore overcoming the linguistic hurdle placed before him or her.

The second category of strategies would be the Achievement or Compensatory Strategies, which take into account subgroups proposed by Færch and Kasper (1983), Kellermen et al (1987) and Tarone (1981). There are a total of 6 subgroups in this category. The first subgroup is code switching (**2**), which Kellerman et al (1987) and Tarone (1981) listed as transfer, where the speaker would use a L1 or L3 word or phrase and its pronunciation in an L2 conversation. For example, 'Let's go *makan*' where the word *makan*, which means '*eat*', is pronounced as /māḵāṇ/.

The second subgroup is circumlocution (**3**), or analytic, where the speaker specifies characteristic features of the action or item. For example, 'soft paper for wiping face' for 'tissue paper'. The third subgroup is approximation (**4**) or generalization (Færch and Kasper, 1983), where an alternative term is used to describe an item which shares characteristics with the target item. For example, 'nice sail boat' for 'yacht'.

The fourth subgroup in this category is word coinage (**5**) or morphological creativity, where a new word is created by applying

morphological rules to the L2 word. For example, 'kung fu bug' to describe a praying mantis.

Literal Translation (**6**), which is the fifth subgroup, occurs when the speaker literally translates a lexical item, an idiom, a compound word or structure from L1 to L2. For example, some Malaysians may say, 'frog under the coconut shell' which is the literal translation of the Malay equivalent when describing someone who is unworldly. The final subgroup, retrieval (**7**) was listed by Celce-Murcia et al (1995) where the speaker would repeatedly sound out parts of the words, as though slowly retrieving it from memory until the whole word is formed. For example, 'bro…bron…bronze'.

The third category of strategies is Stalling or Time Gaining Strategies, put forth by both Dörnyei (1995) and Celce Murcia et al (1995). The first subgroup under this strategy is initiate topic (**8**). A debater, upon abandoning the first argument, may simultaneously seek an alternative argument or point to support his or her case line. So instead of wasting time grappling for a certain term, by initiating a line of thought that is to their advantage, a debater may gain time that would be otherwise lost.

Celce Murcia et al (1995) also listed repetition of self (**9**) and repetition of others (**10**) as subgroups under this category. The rational behind this is to give the speaker either more time to think before proceeding or provide a scaffolding to latch on to. Use of fillers (**11**) like 'hmmm', 'arr', 'well' or other gambits like filled pauses are also

listed as a subgroup under stalling strategies as it also functions as a time gaining device.

The fourth category listed by Celce Murcia et al (1995) in their taxonomy is Self Monitoring Strategies. Under this strategy, speakers will reconstruct, restructure or go through self initiated repair (**12**). This strategy parallels Krashen's Monitor Model (1981) where the speaker is conscious of the rules and when the utterances made do not follow the rules, the speaker will initiate repair, reconstruct or restructure. For example, 'I has…I have a book'.

The fifth and final category of strategies in this list is Interactional Strategies. The subgroups listed here are based on strategies proposed by Tarone (1981), Færch and Kasper (1983), Dörnyei (1995) and Celce Murcia et al (1995).

The first subgroup is comprehension check (**13**). This subgroup put forth by Celce Murcia et al (1995) is the speaker's way of making sure that the interlocutor can follow what is being said and also check if the interlocutor is still engaged in the conversation or, in other words, still listening.

The second subgroup, which is direct appeal for assistance (**14**) would occur when the speaker directly engages the interlocutor in solving the communication gap or problem. For example, 'What do you call…?'

The last subgroup under this category is mime or gestures (**15**), which are non linguistic or non verbal cues used to convey a message or appeal for assistance. Eye contact, raised eyebrows, hand gestures,

are amongst a few of the non linguistic devices that fall under this category.

Debate is goal directed communication (Cragan et al, 2004, p. 70) and the goal of every debater is to win. Despite their varying labels, all the CS categories listed are achievement strategies. Even the first category, which is avoidance or reduction strategy, if used effectively can bring about victory for the debater.

3.5   Methods of Analysis

The video recordings were viewed and transcribed. The transcription was done using conventions set by Du Bois et al (1993) in *Outline of Discourse Transcription* cited in Edward and Lampert (1993) *Talking Data: Transcription and Coding in Discourse Research.* (APPENDIX O)

The video recordings were essential for the researcher to identify the strategic considerations (SC) used by each debate team and also identify the communication strategies (CS) used by the debaters to get their case line, points, POIs and rebuttals across.

In order to tabulate the frequency of each of the CS used, the researcher used a simple table (APPENDIX I) to tabulate them.

When discussing the data from a qualitative perspective, excerpts of relevant transcriptions will be extracted and discussed.

The semi structured questionnaire will be analysed quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Relevant responses are included to triangulate and or explain actions and reactions during the debates.

The contents of the unstructured interview and observation notes will be looked at from a qualitative point of view for the discussion in Chapter 4.