

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter the problems faced by Chinese students studying in Malaysia using English as a means of communication are discussed but prior to discussing what their problems are, the chapter will first highlight the strategies used by these students in conveying their message based on the three tasks set for them as mentioned in Chapter 3. It is from the discussions of the communicative strategies used and by the frequency in usage of these strategies that the kinds of problems faced by these students can be assessed. This is then followed by implications and recommendations in chapter 5.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the participants comprise 10 students from China studying in Malaysia. The framework that is used to analyse the strategies is based on a taxonomy adapted from Dornyei (1995). Dornyei divides the communication strategies into two main parts: avoidance strategy and compensatory strategy. Below is the list of the nine strategies that will be identified and discussed in this study.

Table 4.1: Types of Communication Strategies

Avoidance Strategies	Compensatory Strategies
Message abandonment	Stalling/ time gaining strategy
Topic avoidance	Code switching strategy
	Appeal for help strategy 1) direct appeal 2) indirect appeal
	Approximation strategy
	Literal translation strategy -semantic translation
	Circumlocution strategy
	Non-linguistic signals strategy

Adapted from Dornyei, 1995

The following is an analysis of results derived from the three tasks administered on 10 students from China. As mentioned in Chapter 1, focus will be given to the problems encountered by these students in their attempt to use English as a means of communication. The various communication strategies used by these students will be categorised and discussed according to the strategies identified by Dornyei. A brief discussion of the relevant communication strategies of Dornyei as listed above will be given prior to a discussion on the respective communication strategies identified from the results.

4.1 Avoidance Strategies

According to Dornyei's (1955) description, avoidance strategies comprise both topic avoidance and message abandonment. The concept of avoidance was first referred to in Duskove's (1969) study on second language (L2) learners. Avoidance strategy can be broken down into two subcategories. One is message abandonment in terms of syntactic or lexical avoidance and the other is topic avoidance where the whole topic or conversation is avoided entirely. Avoidance of topic as discussed by Schachter (1974) or low representation of topic as discussed by Levenston (1971), also means a procedural strategy which a speaker uses when trying to substitute a required form with another as a result of inadequate linguistic resources (Faerch and Kasper, (eds). 1983). This can be categorised as lexical avoidance. In this sense, avoidance strategies would involve a specific plan which invokes a necessity to overcome a linguistic problem.

Klaus and Buhr (1976, p.974) on the other hand define "Linguistic problems" as the "recognition by an individual...of the insufficiency of his ... existing knowledge to reach a ... goal". This could be considered to mean topic avoidance as a whole for in being restrained by linguistic problems, a message may be discarded completely by a speaker. Nonetheless, within this strategy a speaker may also manage to "devise ingenious methods of overcoming his/her linguistic inadequacy such as changing the subject, pretending not to understand (a classical means for avoiding answering a question), simply not responding at all, or noticeably by abandoning the entire desire to convey a particular message when a thought becomes too difficult to express" Brown (2000: p.129).

In this chapter, Dornyei's model of communicative strategies will be followed. It begins by looking at Message abandonment followed by topic avoidance.

4.1.1 Message Abandonment

The term message abandonment suggests totally avoiding talking about a topic but Tarone (1981:121) defines message abandonment as a phenomenon "in which a speaker begins to talk about a concept but, because he/she is unable to continue, he/she needs to stop in mid-utterance." In this sense, message abandonment is seen as a risk-taking strategy where the message is aborted when the speaker is in the midst of an utterance. Faerch and Kasper (1983) classify message abandonment as a communication strategy that belongs to the higher order of functional reduction strategies, whereby a speaker actually reduces his/her communication goal in order to alleviate the linguistic problem he/she is facing. Of the various types of strategies identified in avoidance strategy, it seems that the most common is message abandonment. To illustrate, the conversation between a learner (L) and a native speaker (NS) taken from Brown (2000:128) is provided below to show syntactic or lexical avoidance:

L : I lost my road
NS : you lost your road?
L : uh,...I lost. I lost. I got lost.

According to Brown (2000), the example above demonstrates a learner using the lexical item **road**, due to his inability to come up with the word 'way' at that point. Due to the speaker's inability to continue with the conversation because he/she was unable to say 'lost the way', the speaker abandons the desire to proceed any further, thus stops midway.

In this chapter, an analysis of the communication strategies used by the 5 pairs of students are portrayed in order to demonstrate how the participants have resorted to lexical/syntactic avoidance because they were unable to proceed any further with their conversations as a result of their problems with lexis or syntax. The examples quoted below illustrate how the strategy of message abandonment was employed by the speakers due to their inability to continue their conversations.

Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 are examples of message abandonment which had occurred as a result of the speakers' linguistic problem which they faced in terms of semantic as evidenced in the data shown.

Table 4.2: Conversations between H and Z on a movie

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
186	H	And...I have a movie, eh... I forgot the name, is "unfair trade" you know , in Chinese name is "不道德交易"
187	Z	I never heard that, is that famous?
188	H	Not very famous, but...er...if you, you will feel
189	Z	How was that movie
190	H	Er...the story is talking about...a girl...a couple... and they don't have money, poor and can't pay for the house

Table 4.2 is an extract of the conversation between H and Z who were both making attempts to talk about a movie that had been seen by H. This was initiated in turn 186. H introduced the movie by referring to it in its Chinese name as shown in turn 186. In the next turn, 187, Z explains that he does not know much about the movie and then he proceeds to ask H if it is a well known movie as in the term 'famous'. H explains that it is not very 'famous' and he further tried to express himself. H apparently faces a difficulty which was probably due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary. This is shown by the presence of 'er' in the utterance which was then followed by pauses. As H struggles and faces the inability to

proceed further, he decides to abandon his entire description and he turns to using a new utterance, ‘if you, you will feel’ in the turn 188. As Z pursues with the question on how the movie was in turn 189, H again attempts to provide a relevant answer but he is clearly facing another struggle as shown by the use of ‘er’ followed by a pause. Subsequently, he rose to the occasion by saying, ‘the story is talking about...’ and when he was again thwarted by his lack of vocabulary, he decides to fill it in with details of the story rather than his opinion about the story. This example illustrates an act of message abandonment due to the speaker’s inability to use appropriate vocabulary and so it becomes an act of message abandonment.

Table 4.3: Conversation between P and W on the issue of legal age for gambling

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
155	P	er...I feel that, you play the gambling in ego
156	W	ego, what is ego
157	P	maybe I made mistake, er...legal
158	W	legal, don't know
159	P	don't forbidden
160	W	oh
161	P	choose
162	W	choose, choose, government er...
163	P	did you have try
164	W	no

Table 4.3 is an extract of the conversation between P and W on the issue of the legal age for gambling at Genting Highlands. Speaker P initiated the conversation by seeking affirmation as to whether it is legal for them to gamble there at turn 155. In the next turn, 156, W who fails to understand P’s comment especially the word ‘ego’ seeks clarification. This is done through the repetition of the word ‘ego’ which was used by P which was then followed with the questions ‘what is ego’. In turn 157, P replaces the word ‘ego’ with ‘legal’ probably having discovered his mistake in choice of word and through this replacement

manages to get his original question across. At turn 160, W finally acknowledges his understanding of the question with the exclamation ‘oh’ and goes on to answer the question at turn 162. However, here W who wants to say that the issue of legality depends on the government of the country in which the gambling takes place is unable to do so due to language difficulties. Having no means to cope with his linguistic inadequacies, he thus abandons what he is saying as seen in his utterances ‘choose, choose government er..’ at turn 162. P, who does not get the answer to his question, goes on to ask another question which is about W’s experience in gambling. Thus, the utterance at turn 162 is an example of message abandonment.

Table 4.4: Conversation between P and W on the issue of religion

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
189	P	do you have any religion
190	W	no religion, I have a friend here, I knew
191	P	there are so many Muslim here
192	W	so how about your memory, your experience about Malaysia
193	P	so, so not bad, the people very friendly,er...if you go in er...
194	W	the weather here is very hot, very hot
195	P	you can find Chinese food here, many many

Table 4.4 is an extract of a conversation between P and W on the issue of religion. P was trying to have a conversation on the issue of religion which was initiated at turn 189. P tries to elicit a response from W about his religious path. W responds by saying that he is a free thinker in ‘no religion’. This is seen in turn 190. W, however, went on to talk about him having a friend here. P, at turn 191 does not respond to W’s claim of having a friend in Malaysia and goes back to the issue of religion by stating that there are many Muslims in Malaysia. W does not respond to this and goes on to ask P about his experience in Malaysia. This is seen in turn 192. P attempts to relate his experience at turn 193 but then

he seems to abandon what he is saying as seen in his utterance ‘so, so not bad, the people very friendly, er...if you go in er...’ in turn 193. W, at turn 194, does not try to discuss further what P had stated at turn 193, and goes on to talk about the weather. The utterance of P at turn 193 is considered message abandonment because P was unable to express his thoughts on the topic being discussed due to inadequate vocabulary.

From the examples above, it can be inferred that the speakers are not just leaving out words because of limited vocabulary but rather they abandoned the entire message due to their low level of language proficiency.

Table 4.5: Conversation between M and C about their studies

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
44	M	You study what
45	C	Mathematics
46	M	Mathematics there? Oh, I see
47	C	Yeah
48	M	And you know, some very strange things in “石家庄青少年宫”, you know last time I remember a children, at noon, all the students they go back, and only myself in the office, and another boy, his father very busy, have no time to... to take care, to back , he stay in my office, and waiting his father and then he told me, teacher, I want to go to toilet, I say ok, and then he go suddenly he cry and come back

Table 4.5 is an extract of a conversation between M and C who were both making an attempt to share their experiences with regards to their studies; M initiated the conversation at turn 44. While conversing, M at turn 48 attempts to share the experience she had when she was a tutor in China. The experience that she shares is about a particular student she had. In her utterance at turn 48, it appears that M has abandoned her message midway after she says, ‘have no time...to take care, to back’. However, on deeper analysis, it is not really message abandonment but rather syntactic simplification. Syntactic simplification

can be considered as a strategy which appears very close to message abandonment but in essence it is different because the message is not totally abandoned but is rather simplified. The reason as to why it can be categorised as message abandonment here is because at turn 48, the verb ‘are’ is missing. In the examples quoted above, the lexical abandonment occurs due to the differences between the two language systems; Mandarin and English. In Mandarin, there is no specific word for “do” and “does”. As a result, the student who maybe competent in Mandarin but here she/he would face difficulty in using the verb “do” and “does” as these do not exist in his/her list of vocabulary. As a result, these verbs would be omitted in his/her utterances and would emerge as a form of message abandonment caused by syntactic simplification.

Table 4.6: Conversation between S and A on the profession of an engineer

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
57	S	may I know what did you do before
58	A	civil engineer,
59	S	that one is difficult, actually it is more professional
60	A	it is professional, you know this work , is man
61	S	yeah, yeah, yeah, because more, the man like it very much, because a lot of calculation and
62	A	the lady doesn’t want, because it is very dirty and outside, you know, the lady is always like beautiful

Table 4.6 is an extract from a conversation between S and A on the issue relating to the job of an engineer. S initiates the conversation at turn 57. Due to both [parties’ lack of proficiency in English, it appears that speaker S began to create the message avoidance strategy at turn 61 where S says ‘yeah, yeah, yeah, because more, the man like it very much, because a lot of calculation and...’. Here the utterance halted midway and clearly because of their lack of vocabulary. It appears that the last word following and was omitted and as a result, the entire message could not continue. This is thus seen as a strategy of

message abandonment caused by lexical deficiency.

The examples discussed above have shown message abandonment at the lexical and semantic level. In essence, the speakers abandon their message due to their inability to retrieve the word or expression needed to convey their message in the target language. Bialystok (1990), in her analysis of the utterances of her subjects claims that there is extensive use of pauses in the process of message abandonment. Similarly, in the above examples, there is clear evidence of pauses and fillers to fill the gaps such as 'er'. However, one new thing that the researcher identified in the data is that sometimes the speaker uses the message simplification strategy in place of message abandonment. In this method, the conversation does not end abruptly but rather the speakers manage to continue with their conversations through some simplified ways.

4.1.2 Topic Avoidance

Topic avoidance occurs when “the learner tries to avoid talking about topics or concepts due to language difficulties” (Tarone, 1981:122). The speaker makes a conscious effort to completely ignore concepts or messages which he/she feels lie outside the scope of his/her linguistic abilities. Identifying topic avoidance with absolute accuracy has never been easy because the occurrence appears in the planning stage of an utterance. Thus, there is hardly any linguistic clue. However, the types of topic avoidance identified in this study are traced to those instances where a change of topic occurs due to an intention to avoid talking about the concepts. In some instances, it will also occur in non verbal response. Although the tasks given to the participants are related to their daily lives, there are circumstances where

speakers maybe ignorant of a particular topic, and thus, unable to participate in a discussion. The following examples serve as evidence to show how speakers change the topics of conversation when they encounter language or knowledge difficulties of the subject discussed.

Table 4.7: Conversation on hometown between speaker H and Z

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
11	H	but in my hometown, there is a river, call “Songhua jiang” and a big mountain er er...north
12	Z	so just has line mountain
13	H	line mountain?
14	Z	that means very small, you can jumping
15	H	oh, but you know in my hometown, eh... people, in north of China why you come to Malaysia
16	Z	actually, because I think er, er...the education in China is not good as Malaysia, er because how to say and er another reason here I can go to University of Malaya
17	H	

The extract above illustrates a conversation between H and Z and the topic of discussion is about their hometown. H in this extract attempts to describe the landscape in his hometown first in turn 11. He starts by stating that there is a river and then a big mountain. Z in response adds to the conversation by stating that there is a small mountain in turn 14. However, at this stage, the message gets distorted for Z says that one can jump from it in turn 14. In turn 15, H, shows he understands and this is seen in his word ‘oh’. H then goes on to describe the people in his hometown but in turn 16, Z changes the subject by asking ‘why you come Malaysia’. At this point, more than one interpretation as to why Z changed the topic could be derived. First, it could be because Z finds the topic on the natural landscape uninteresting. Second, it could be because she did not understand the topic or third, it could be because she did not have the language competency to continue conversing on the subject. In the context of this study, the extract is taken to be a form of topic

avoidance strategy. It is understood that the topic is changed by Z who probably realized that her level of language competency does not permit her to carry on a continuous and meaningful conversation.

Table 4.8: Conversation between H and Z on the issue of homesickness

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
261	H	why? What you will do?
262	Z	I came to Malaysia for three months, I saw my parents just internet, and ...I never saw my mother just internet, and...eh...something I totally and ...with my parents, but I still love them, they still love me
263	H	of course, the parents love you
264	Z	<i>er, er and er...my friends in China eh, when I return to China, they are studying in high school, and they will</i>
265	H	oh, tomorrow, not tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, have final exams in high school
266	Z	yeah, I want to call them
267	H	call them, encourage

Table 4.8 is an extract of conversation between speaker H and Z on the issue of homesickness. At turn 262, Z is totally engrossed in expressing her thoughts on her parents whom she appears to be missing as is expressed by her affection of ‘love’. At turn 263, H agrees with Z that her parents definitely love her. At turn 264, Z was probably trying to say more things but due to some linguistic barrier was restrained and so managed with ‘er, er, and er’ followed by pauses before proceeding to talking about ‘...friends back in China’. Here the analysis shows that there is an attempt by Z to change the subject from talking about love and parents to a discussion about her friends who are studying in China.

In the case of this extract, it seems that the reason for the change in topic is not due to inadequate language proficiency, as the background of H shows that she is quite fluent. It is thus concluded that H did not want to go down the lane of reminiscing her parents as she

misses them. It is probable that her utterances could have been induced by non-verbal signs of homesickness and tears which have not been indicated in the extract and thus, the switch of topic was necessary. This reason for the change of the topic appears to be a plausible interpretation for she repeatedly uses er, er and er... to show hesitation and then she changes the topic in turn 264 with her statement on her friends back in China. The repetition of ‘er’ which indicates hesitation clearly denotes her inability to continue with the topic of conversation. In this context, topic avoidance was initiated due to the speakers desire to protect both of them from being emotionally overwhelmed.

Table 4.9: Conversation between H and Z on computer games

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
312	H	it is good, don't play computer games
313	Z	I did not long time, just sometimes...
314	Z	I always great
315	H	(smile), er... when you come back
316	Z	10 th of june
317	H	10 th
318	Z	em, 28 th
319	H	come back, em, you know 28 th
320	Z	I know 28 th is your birthday
321	H	yeah, but why you don't come back later, er...earlier

Table 4.9 shows two speakers talking about computer games which was initiated by H in turn 312. In turn 313, Z exclaims that she has not used it for a long period (since she arrived in Malaysia), ‘just sometimes...’ while Z claims in turn 314 that she is able to control the number of hours she spends on the computer games. H acknowledges this with a smile (non-verbal) in turn 315. Probably deciding that the topic was uninteresting or beyond her knowledge, H decides to begin a new topic by asking, ‘er...when you come back’ and we see the conversation continuing from there. In the context of this extract, the topic on

computer games was changed due to H's desire to apply the topic avoidance strategy of pursuing with the former. It is deduced that the strategy was applied due to two probabilities: a lack in interest in computer games as well as a highly possibility that one of the speakers lack the knowledge on the topic issue.

Table 4.10: Conversation between C and D about their plans after completion of their studies in Malaysia

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
37	C	I am not sure, maybe I will er...I will go back to work or ...stay here
38	D	stay here?
39	C	for a few years to get working experience and then I come, go back to China
40	D	that is good, good, and er...do you find a girlfriend here?
41	C	eh...excuse me
42	D	I mean do you try to get a girlfriend in Malaysia
43	C	in Malaysia, er...no, I like ...er...Korean girl, because I ...yeah

Table 4.10 is an extract of a conversation between speaker C and D on the topic of their future plans, after they have completed their studies in Malaysia. The choices opened to them were either to stay on in Malaysia or to return to China. At turn 37, C states that he is unsure as to whether to return to China and work there or to stay on in Malaysia. In response, D who is unsure as to C's intentions seeks affirmation by repeating the phrase 'stay here' in a raised tone. At turn 39, C explains what he meant by staying here. He explains that he is thinking of staying on to gain some working experience in Malaysia. At turn 40, speaker D comments that C's idea is good and then goes on to change the topic to something more personal as seen in his utterance, 'that is good, good and er...do you find a girlfriend here?'. At this point, it can be deduced that D changes the topic which is a topic avoidance strategy because he has lost interest in the current topic or because he has

nothing more to add to the topic due his limited language proficiency.

Table 4.11: Conversation between C and D on the issue of transportation in Malaysia

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
61	C	eh... I don't think so...eh, the transportation in here is not eh...very good, eh...when I wait the bus, eh...every eh...every time...eh... at least must wait 20 minutes to 30 minutes, it is too slow
62	D	you like shopping
63	C	shopping
64	D	I find there are quite a lot of shopping mall in Malaysia,
65	C	shopping mall, yeah, eh...not so much, sometimes, i...if I want buy something, I will go there
66	D	once I went to Twin Tower, KL then I feel it is really top, I mean the environment around Twin Tower is eh...not as well as inside tower, so do you think so

Table 4.11 is another extract taken from the conversation between speaker C and D. In this table, we can see that a change of topic occurs in turn 62. At this point, speaker D, who is having a conversation about transportation in Malaysia, avoids responding to the comments made by C in turn 61. Instead, the topic was avoided when C proceeds to ask 'you like shopping'. The conversation then continues with D sharing his experience about a visit to Twin Towers. The change of topic in turn 62 leads the two speakers to talk about shopping. Although it is not certain that speaker D switched to a new topic because of boredom, it can be assumed that D was into shopping, hence the shift in topic. Thus, the strategy was seen as avoidance of topic due to a new interest in subject.. This example illustrates another example of topic avoidance.

Based on tables 4.7 to 4.11, it can be seen that the examples given clearly indicate that Chinese speakers tend to change their topics of conversation in the midst of an ongoing conversation. This is not because of problems related to the act of retrieving lexical items

specifically, but rather due to their inability to prolong the conversation in an interesting manner. Thus, it may be possible that it is not the speakers' limited vocabulary which affects topic change in a conversation. Another logical argument that had induced the change of topics by the speakers is that all these conversations are related to daily topics which indirectly involve common words and phrases. In that sense, the speakers were able to shift topics at a fast pace without much difficulty. Kleinmann (1977) considers this change from one topic to another topic as a form of topic avoidance.

4.2 Compensatory Strategies

From Avoidance strategies, we now move to compensatory strategies. When foreign/second language learners face some sort of communicative deficiency in communication, they use compensatory strategies to achieve successful communication. Thus, compensatory strategies are used to bridge the gap that exists between the non-native speakers' linguistic competence in the target language and their communicative needs. This means that compensatory strategies are used to overcome problems faced by speakers due to their inability to retrieve the linguistic items which can enable them to continue conversing. Rababah (2004: 148) confirms this by pointing out that language learners attempt to solve their communication problems consciously, as they are aware of their lack of adequate resources in the target language. Most researchers have more or less the same opinion on communication strategies which are used to bridge the gap that exists between the non-native speakers' linguistic competence in the target language and their communication needs.

Compensatory strategies are productive. Learners devise something to deal with their inability to continue a message. According to Tarone (1977:195), compensatory strategies are used “to overcome the problems which occur when language structures are inadequate to convey the individual thoughts.” Compensatory strategies involve the need for “compensation for missing knowledge” (Ibid: 129). Poulisse (1995) claims that compensatory strategies are related to the general study of communications.

As mentioned, compensatory strategy is subdivided into 7 different strategies; they are stalling/ time gaining strategy, code-switching strategy, appeal for help strategy, approximation strategy, literal translation strategy, circumlocution strategy and non-linguistic signal strategy. These strategies will be discussed in detail below.

4.2.1 Stalling or time gaining strategy

In speech, speakers stall time within conversations or speech-making processes so that they can rearrange what they want to say. Stalling can be in the form of pauses, silence or using fillers. Based on an analysis of the utterances of the speakers in the current study, two major types of realization were found to be used namely pauses and fillers. According to Pawley & Syder, 1983; Raupach, 1984; Towel et.al, 1996, pauses and fillers may comprise of unfilled or non-lexicalized filled pauses, lengthening a sound or drawing while thinking ahead, and lexicalized pauses. Unfilled or non-lexicalized filled pauses require no additional processing but are inadequate in maintaining the appearance of fluency which has resulted in hesitant and disjointed speech. Lengthening a sound or drawing while thinking ahead, is a more elaborate variation of non-lexicalized filled pause, and it is effective in holding the floor. Lexicalized pauses on the other hand help in the use of various filling words or more

prefabricated chunks. The tables below are examples of time gaining strategies found in the conversations of the pairs of students in this study.

Table 4.12: Randomly selected utterances with unfilled or non-lexicalized **filled pauses** as time gaining strategy from conversations of D, Z, M and C with their respective partners

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
54	D	because... when I study, I feel it is not enough time for me to sports and ...maybe it is depend on the person
86	Z	last year, I live in Beijing for...for 1 month and I like, one month, so nice, you know Beijing is so big, I can play... I live in xuanwu and I can go to Chaoyang and many place to play, and I make so many friends
180	M	oh, I see...I like my, so what's your plan in "Shijiazhuang" in two weeks
231	Cthey , he got a lot friends, why people like him, because eh...the character in WWE is not true, you know, the character is eh...they like this character, personality

Table 4.12 gives examples of utterances from different contexts of conversations. It aims to show how unfilled or non-lexicalized filled pauses have taken place in the conversations of the five pairs of students in this study. For example in turn 54, D says, 'because... when I study, I feel it is not enough time for me to sports and ...maybe it is depending on the person' which is filled with pauses just after the use of the conjunction, 'because'. Here there is a pause between the word 'because' and 'when' probably occurs because speaker D is trying to gain some time to put his thoughts into words.

Another example can be seen in the conversation between Z and H on the topic of life in Beijing, where at turn 86, Z says 'last year, I live in Beijing for...for 1 month' . Here there is evidence of unfilled pauses which are used for gaining time. The speaker used pauses to

gain time for himself. The strategies were employed after the word 'for' and also after the word 'play'.

At turn 180, it appears that M in her conversation with her partner on the topic of the plan to go back to 'Shijiazhuang', uses an unfilled pause after the phrase 'I see' as a form of time gaining strategy. Clearly 'for' was used twice as a repetition strategy to gain time for herself.

Unlike the use of pauses as a time gaining strategy in turn 54, 86 and 180, here at turn 231, C in his conversation with D used pauses as a strategy to gain time before he moved on to say 'they...'. C pauses before he responds to D as to why he (the friend) has a lot of friends. The pause occurred in the beginning of the utterance probably because C is trying to recall or find the right words to express his view on the issue of 'he' having a lot of friends.

Lengthening of sound

This is also another strategy used by learners as a move to gain time while talking. It appears that some speakers may resort to lengthening sounds as a means of gaining time.

Table 4.13: Randomly selected utterances with **lengthening a sound or drawing** as time gaining strategy from conversations of C, H, and Z with their respective partners

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
144	C	I don't think so, eh...the ...the white T-shirt, eh...and after 2-3 hours, it become dark
194	H	and he told the girl, eh... can you eh marry me, and the girl said I have husband, and later eh...eh... the rich man eh... brought a lot of trousseaus, and ...a lot of ...something
240	Z	eh...eh...so it's choice, eh... my teacher eh..said tell me one sentence, choice eh...another meaning is ...give up you choose one , but you should give up another

Table 4.13 gives a list of utterances which show the use of lengthening a sound by students as a time gaining strategy as seen in the conversations of five pairs selected in this study. Studies say that time stalling strategy is usually used by ESL speakers to assist them in maintaining the flow of conversation and at the same time, they have some time to think over what they want to say or to find the right words from their existing vocabulary. A very clear example can be seen in turn 144, where C lengthens the sound of 'eh...the...' while commenting on the effects of long usage of white T-shirt. This is seen in her utterance 'I don't think so, **eh...the** ...the white T-shirt, eh...and after 2-3 hours, it become dark'. The purpose of lengthening the sound of the word 'eh' twice and 'the' once is for the purpose of composing his thoughts and finding the right words. Another example is seen in turn 194, where H

tries to gain time by drawing on the word ‘eh...eh...’ a couple of times. This is seen in his utterance “and he told the girl, **eh...**can you eh marry me, and the girl said I have husband, and later **eh...eh...** the rich man **eh...**brought a lot of trousseaus, and ...a lot of ...something”. This is strategy of lengthening a sound or drawing is effective for it does not put a stop to the conversation but rather allows the speakers to pursue the conversation at their own pace. Z too lengthens the sound of ‘eh’ a few times at turn 240 for the purpose of gaining time. This is seen in her utterance ‘**eh...eh...**so it’s choice, **eh...**my teacher eh..said tell me one sentence, choice eh...another meaning is ...give up you choose one , but you should give up another’. Thus, the examples above all demonstrate the use of fillers to stall time.

Table 4.14: Utterances with **lexicalized pauses** as time gaining strategy

	Turn	Speaker	Utterance
A	82	M	oh, you know , it's very different from...the first important thing is I need to join, then I pass that, the university give me call me and pass that and you can get some interview, math, history and the other subject, actually 300 is enough, but the painting is very difficult, the first is eh...somebody..., that very fast, we have to do that, so it is very difficult for us, <i>so</i> if you pass that, <i>actually</i> you can, you can go to university
B	84	M	yeah , it is very difficult, I never imagine I can pass it too, I am very lucky, yeah, yeah, I think, so I told myself, ok if I pass I go for study, I still stay there for my work(NV-smile), you know, at that time, my parents, they don't know I go to the university, they don't know, so lucky girl
	85	C	yeah, yeah, so lucky
	86	M	so , do you know why eh... "Shijiazhuang" so many things I don't know, because I finish my, my high school, no second school "TianJing"
	87	M	I will tell you, eh... "幼儿师范学校"
	88	C	yeah , I know
	89	M	
C	237	C	I want to take my parents to there
	238	M	oh, I see, but
	239	C	<i>but</i> I think my parents don't need me
	240	M	yeah, yeah
	241	C	because eh...they have their own life
	242	M	oh, yeah actually you know , I want to learn outside, but finish my study and I will go back to China, because China is my country, ... customer
	243	C	yeah, yeah, you know when you in America, you are Chinese, so so can study outside, but I will go back to China
	244	M	

The utterances in table 4.14 are extracts compiled from three situations (labelled A, B, and C). It appears that the students from China in this study frequently use fillers as a strategy for stalling or gaining time. In table 4.14, the '**you know**' is a common phrase which many speakers would use. In this extract, stalling of time or gaining of time was accomplished as a strategy and this is clearly seen in turn 82, 242, and 243. The phrase 'you know' is

normally considered to be a hedge that is used for implicit transmission of information. This can be seen in the utterance made by M at turn 82. Speaker M said 'oh, you know' in response to acknowledge C's comment indicating that she has something important to say. The phrase was articulated as a time gaining strategy. This is similar to turns 242 and 244 where M uses 'you know' again. The expression 'you know' does not in itself add anything to the basic meaning of a sentence, but it acts as a filler to fill the gap in the conversation so as to ensure that the flow of speech is not disrupted.

Another filler which features prominently in the utterances of the China students as shown in table 4.12 is the word 'so'. As a conjunction, 'so' clearly allows speakers to gain some time in speech because hearers might have to wait and process the word before they realise that it bears no specific meaning unless in context. Analysis of the utterances indicates that 'so' has been used in many different ways. 'So' as we know can be used in various ways for example as an adverb (it all happened so quickly), for emphasis (so many, so excited, etc.) to show opinion (I think so), to draw comparison (no so beautiful as...), to state a purpose (I'll get a map so we can identify where...), and also for various other reasons (Macmillan English Dictionary for Advance Learner, 2006). Besides some of the uses of 'so' as listed here, 'so' may be used as a way to elicit feedback. An example is traced to M's response at turn 87 (situation B). Besides this, other functions of 'so' are also seen from the example at turn 86, where M says 'so lucky girl' (used for emphasis) and at turn 82, where M says "we have to do that, so it is very difficult for us, so if you pass that, actually you can, you can go to the university. In this utterance, 'so' is used twice and it appears to be used as a conjunction. Thus, 'so' is used as a linker where by it connects the sentences 'we have to pass' and 'it is difficult' as well as the sentences 'if you pass my exam' and 'I can go to the university'.

In addition, another filler, **‘actually’** is also detected. ‘Actually’ is an adverb which means ‘really’ and it is used for emphasizing what is really true and what really happened. It is also used for emphasizing that something is surprising or when correcting what someone has said or thinks or it maybe used when admitting something. In the examples show in table 4.14 above, ‘actually’ is used for emphasizing what is really true as seen in turns 82 and 242. ‘actually’ used in turn 82 functions as a mode of confirmation while ‘actually’ in turn 242 functions as a mode of emphasis. This can be said by speakers to gain time.

Another filler identified is the word **'yeah'**. 'Yeah' is used in daily conversations for a number of purposes, such as to confirm, to approve, to accept, to agree and to respect what has been said. The analysis of the utterances in table 4.14 shows that 'yeah' is used quite regularly by the students. At turn 84, M says "yeah, it is very difficult". Here the use of ‘yeah’ is for confirmation or even emphasis. This is almost similar to the function of "oh, yeah" at turn 242. However, at turn 86, M's use of "yeah, yeah, so lucky girl" is used to show agreement. At turn 240, M uses "yeah, yeah" to elicit further comments from C. M's use of 'yeah, yeah' at turn 244 seems to be for affirmation. On the whole, it can be concluded that 'yeah' is filler which is often used by speakers to maintain the flow of the conversation and in doing so also assist the speakers in gaining some time before they speak.

Based on the above discussion, it appears that the strategy of 'stalling or time gaining strategy by way of unfilled or non-lexicalized filled pauses, lengthening a sound or drawing on lexicalized pauses such as silence and the use of fillers are commonly used by China students and it is clearly noticed in the conversation between the students from China as shown in table 4.12 to 4.14. Thus, it can be said that stalling/time gaining strategy through

the use of fillers and pauses is one of the important communication strategies used by L2 speakers to ensure that the flow of their conversation continues.

4.2.2 Code-switching strategy

Code switching is a process where another language is used within an utterance conducted in another language. Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976), as well as Corder (1978) claim that this strategy can be seen as 'language switch' which refers to the switching from target language to either L1 or any other foreign language. Tarone (1981) goes on to say that code-switching is the use of "the native language term without bothering to translate." A more precise definition of code-switching is that it is a 'linguistically motivated language switch' in which 'the learner transports a native word or expression, untranslated, into the interlanguage utterance.' (Tarone, Cohen and Dumas 1976:11).

Code-switching can also be related to and be indicative of group membership in particular types of bilingual speech communities. The regularities of the alternating use of two or more languages within one conversation may vary to a considerable degree in speech communities. The speaker, knowing more than one linguistic code, such as Chinese, English, Japanese, etc. switches between these codes to express the meaning in a more meaningful manner.

Table 4.15 below are examples on code switching that took place in the conversations. It appears that most of the code switching is done by China speakers to ensure that the listeners understand their expressions. Since the speakers selected for this study are Chinese students from China, it is obvious that the code switching is from English to Chinese. It is

found that there are many reasons for the strategy of code-switching. The examples indicate that the speakers switched from English to Chinese due to their lack of adequate vocabulary to complete the message in a meaningful manner.

Table 4.15: Code switching to L1 from English at the lexical level

	Turn	Speaker	Utterance
A	10	Z	Yeah, it's different, because Beijing for the kings very big...oh 宫 (palace)... (NV-smile), and Suzhou garden is small and a lot of trees and flowers, 假山(rockery)
	11	H	But in my hometown, there is a river, call "Songhua jiang" and a big mountain eh eh...north
B	64	M	yeah, but ...the ...eh...名牌 (famous brand), here is cheap, so I buy some 名牌 (famous brand) for my family and friends
	65	C	it is good, you can buy some 锡制品 (pewter products) , it is nice, right
	127	M	Yeah, yeah, actually ilike this 手相 (Fortune teller) (NV-body language), sometimes, I know a little, he teach me, so another place, "fuchuan" do you know eh..."tanglonghu" eh... "longfengshan"
	274	C	中介(agent) in "Shijiazhuang" all of the students from my school, because 中介 (agent) is from my school

Table 4.15 illustrates two situations (A and B). Speaker Z at turn 10, says 'it is different, because Beijing for the kings very big...oh宫 (palace)... (NV-smile), and Suzhou garden is small and a lot of trees and flowers, 假山 (rockery)'. In both instances of code-switching, we can conclude that Z uses the words in Chinese because she does not have the right word in English. Other examples of code-switching strategy appear at turn 64 where M uses 名牌

in place of famous and 锡制品 in place of pewter products. Clearly these two examples could not be avoided for two reasons. One was that the learners did not have the English equivalents for these words or they did not have the English equivalents. At turn 274, C uses 中介 in place of agent. All the examples shown above are considered to be code-switching at the lexical level and the strategy is seen frequently in these 3 situations.

Table 4.16: Code switching to L1 from English at the semantic level

	Turn	Speaker	Utterance
A	188	C	em, actually nowadays a lot of 海归 (the students come back from overseas)
	189	M	yeah, yeah
	190	C	become 海带(the students come back from overseas and cannot find a job)
B	284	H	no, no in China
	285	H	I have passed, the education of china is bad
	286	Z	very bad, I hate teachers, you know every teacher always 针对我 (Pay a special attention to me)
	287	H	yeah, but you know in high school, it really
	288	Z	really difficult
	289	H	difficult and unfair

Table 4.16 is a compilation of two situations (A and B). The examples show that code-switching is also done at the semantic level. Here, the speakers who are facing difficulty in expressing their views clearly, turned to code switching. This is seen at turn 286, where Z says ‘very bad, I hate teachers, you know every teacher always 针对我 (Pay a special attention to me),’ and at turn 188 where C says ‘em, actually nowadays a lot of 海归 (the students come back from overseas) and become 海带 (the students come back from

overseas and cannot find a job)' at turn 190.

The utterances in table 4.15 and 4.16 indicate that code-switching strategy has been employed by the speakers in their communication. This is due to the speaker's frequent use of certain expressions in L1 when conversing in English as seen at turn 188, 190 and 286. The more frequent a speaker uses a particular expression in his/her L1 in his/her daily communication; the more likely he/she is to fall back on it when conversing in a different language especially when faced by inadequate vocabulary. Code-switching allows this type of speakers to communicate more effectively.

4.2.3 Appeal for help strategy

Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976) define appeals as instances where the learners ask someone for a correct form or a lexically correct word. Typical examples for appeal for help in conversations are linguistic utterances in clear-cut question forms such as "what do you mean" or "how do you say" or "what is this?" Faerch and Kasper (1983) claim that not all appeals are the same as these. They assert that there is a specific category for cooperative strategies which includes both direct appeals as well as self-intimated errors which are repaired by interlocutors who may interpret verbal or non-verbal signals as appeals and act accordingly. The second form can be categorised as indirect appeal for help.

It is not surprising that appeal for assistance is a common communication strategy found in

this study. This is obviously useful for those who have lower-proficiency as it allows them to immediately participate in conversation. Non-native speakers may also request for linguistic help from their interlocutor. The learner, trying to bridge a gap in the conversation, chooses to ask the hearer for some linguistic assistance on the issue being discussed so as to overcome the problem. When L2 speakers turn to the conversation partner for help either directly or indirectly, it is called ‘Appeal for help’. In this study, there are examples of both direct and indirect appeal for assistance directly. They are illustrated below.

Table 4.17: Direct appeal for help

	Turn	Speaker	Utterance
A	223	A	if he ask something, the student just so the panda is very shy, always alone, but the turtle, one day, panda very shy under the tree, the couple come
	224	S	shy? What is the meaning
B	241	Z	Like Shakespeare’s word?
	242	H	What? what, oh, Shakespeare
	243	Z	to be or not to be, how about you? You tell me a story? Nowadays, I save a film iron man so funny and old man in the movie is very handsome
	244	H	but what you can ... learn from this movie

Table 4.17 is a compilation of 2 situations (A and B) from the conversation between different pairs in the study. In example A, the phrase ‘what’s the meaning’ is used as a form of appeal in the utterance. This is seen at turn 224 when S who fails to understand the meaning of the word ‘shy’ seeks A’s assistance to define the word ‘shy’.

On the other hand at turn 242, speaker H seeks help by using the phrase ‘what’ repeatedly as a form of appeal because he fails to understand what Z says at turn 241. Requests for

help can also be in other forms.

Table 4.18: Indirect appeal for help

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
4	M	It is very nice, so what's your major
5	C	Eh...eh...
6	M	You study what
7	C	Eh... accounting, business accounting
8	M	So, you are business degree

Table 4.18 illustrates selected utterances identified in this study where indirect appeal for help was also detected. The word 'eh' is used at turn 5 in tables 4.18 functions as a request for further clarification. It must be noted here that in the discussion on 'time-gaining strategy', 'eh..eh' is also used. However, at turn 5 in table 4.18, speaker C used 'eh, eh' not to stall or gain time but rather for clarification as she did not understand the meaning of the word 'major' which can be seen at turn 6. Speaker M inquired again using alternative expression 'you study what' to explain the word 'major'.

As we can see in this study, the strategy of "appeal for help" is normally made use of by the speaker who appeals for help directly to solve his/her linguistic problem. The examples also illustrate how the prompt responses from the listeners help the speaker to achieve the desired results. Examples located for this strategy have been displayed and analysed. The section below now discussed the approximation strategy.

4.2.4 Approximation strategy

Approximation means replacing words or phrases which are similar but not exactly the same in the conversation with an assumption that the communication goal can be achieved. Thus what approximation strategy means is that a related term is used in place of the intended term which is not found in the student's list of vocabulary so as to convey the appropriate meaning with a satisfactory level of accuracy. Varadi (1981) in his summary on the various types of message adjustments made by learners gives several examples of approximations which are quoted below:

Table 4.19: Examples of approximation

Object described	Approximation
Rope	-string -strong string -lace for wet clothers
Ghost	-old man -awful man -ugly sir -jack in the box

Varadi's (1981)

The approximations shown in table 4.19 indicate that learners have picked on some semantic feature of the intended item. Bialystok (1990) in her attempt to identify more explicitly the use of approximation, designates two types of utterance in her corpus study to be taken as evidence of the use of approximation. The types she identified are quoted below:

1. Utterances in which a super ordinate set is used (examples are given in bold letters)

Object to be described	Learner's description
swing	It's kind of , you could say, chair for when you move sometimes it's in the trees

Playpen	It's a kind of box , that you put, it is when you put the babies to play
---------	---

2. Those in which a comparison is made to a similar item (examples are given in bold letters below)

Object to be described	Learner's description
stool	It looks like the letter 'A'
Playpen	It's like a cage but you put babies in it

Bialystok distinguishes approximation which uses examples such as 'it is kind... chair' and 'it is a kind of...box' and comparisons such 'it looks like' and 'it is like...'. The technique of using comparison is often used by players in the popular television game 'the pyramid game', in which players attempt to guess descriptions of an item through clues provided by their partners. The only resource open to the player describing the item for identification is paraphrase. Such players often use negation as part of their technique and are very likely to come up with the description: 'it is not a domestic animal, it doesn't look like a leopard, however it also doesn't look like a tiger, it has long fur on its head' as clues for identifying a lion (Bialystok, 1990). In other words, the SLA learners replace a single vocabulary item with a structure sharing sufficient semantic features with the desired item. The subject often uses a common word or a similar word in place of an appropriate term carrying more information in a particular context. In this way, the learners can achieve their original communicative goal by using another related term which can convey the appropriate meaning.

Such use of approximation strategy is also found in the conversation of Chinese students in this study. Examples which use the word ‘like’ and those which do not use the word ‘like’ are shown in tables 4.20 and 4.21 respectively:

Table 4.20: Approximation with the word ‘like’ in this study

Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Target item
96	S	Like bridge between China and Canada, together do business	Business agent
187	A	Just like a picture	Cartoon
209	A	Look like cannot education	Dull
239	A	Put the puma look like jail	Cage

Table 4.20 illustrates selected utterances identified from the conversations of the five pairs in this study where the speakers use the word ‘like’ to indicate that they are providing actual linguistic expression but rather adopting something close or similar to the original linguistic expression. This is seen at turn 96, where S says ‘**Like** bridge between China and Canada, together do business’ to replace the word ‘agent’. Another example is seen at turn 187 where speaker A defines the word ‘cartoon’ by using the phrase ‘like a picture’. In this study it was noted that speaker A tended to use approximation strategy the most as seen at turn 209 where the phrase ‘Look **like** cannot education’ is used in place of the word ‘dull’ and at turn 239 where the phrase ‘Put the puma look **like** jail’ is used to indicate the word ‘cage’.

Table 4.21: Approximation without the word ‘like’ in this study

Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Target item
71	C	Eat together	Party
98	Z	Bird’s home	Bird nest
99	H	Is for swimming, jumping and eh...a lot of store on water	Water cube

160	D	Great talker	Skilled speaker
164	A	Want quiet very difficult	Noisy

Table 4.21 illustrates selected utterances identified from the conversations of the five pairs in this study which clearly indicate the purpose as to why the students use approximation strategy. In most of the cases, the students knew what they wanted to say but they were unable to express themselves freely due to their limited vocabulary. Thus, through the application of the approximation strategy, they are able to achieve their original communicative goal where the related term used conveys a similar meaning.

A clear example is seen at turn 71 where speaker C used the phrase ‘Eat together’ in place of the word ‘party’. Another example is seen at turn 98, where Z says ‘bird’s home’ in place of ‘bird nest’. At turn 99, H who want to say ‘water cube’ uses a lengthy expression ‘is for swimming, jumping and eh...a lot of store on water’. Speaker D too used approximation strategy as seen in turn 160 where he says ‘great talker’ to mean ‘skill speaker’. At turn 164, we can seen that speaker A who wants to say it is noisy, uses the phrase ‘want quiet very difficult’ to indicate the fact that the surrounding is noisy. The examples of approximation strategy shown in table 4.21 clearly indicate the students are able to maintain the conversations in a logical manner despite not having the actual linguistic expressions.

4.2.5 Literal translation strategy

Most L2 learners find the literal translation strategy the easiest to apply when faced with

linguistic problem. According to Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976), literal translation is a form of negative transfer from the native language which results in inappropriate and incorrect utterances. The reason for the inaccuracy is due to the process of translation where a word of the native language is literally translated into the target language.

Researchers of second language studies have observed that most learners believe that for every word or concept in their L1, it is possible to find a single- translated equivalent in the target language, hence literal translation. However, as language and culture will evidence, not all words can be translated and not all native words have English equivalents. Literal translation means translating literally a lexical item, an idiom, a compound word or structure from L1 to L2. Faerch and Kasper (1983) who view this transfer in a positive light, highlight that it is part of achievement- oriented behaviour. In essence literal translation can be divided into two types: lexical translation and semantic translation. However, only semantic type of translation was found in this study. A brief explanation of the lexical and semantic translation is given below.

4.2.5.1 Lexical translation strategy

Lexical translation strategy indicates that ZL1 transfer becomes more predominant as the L2 speakers were more inclined towards thinking in Chinese when they attempt to speak in the target language. The speakers tend to think and formulate notions in Chinese first when they interact. In doing so, they might also experience difficulties in expressing themselves in English, and when they translate them into equivalent lexical items in Chinese, the meaning becomes distorted. In the data collected in this study, examples of lexical translation were not evident. However, semantic translation strategy was found to be employed.

4.2.5.2 Semantic Translation strategy

Semantic Translation means switching the meaning from L1 to L2. Semantic translation was found to exist in the data of this study in various structural constructions. It may appear at the sentence level or phrase level. Normally, for students from China, when faced with difficulties to get the actual expression to present their views in a conversation, they have no choice but to translate them into English from Mandarin. Below are some examples taken from the study where the semantic translation strategy was used by the participants.

Table 4.22: Utterances with semantic translation strategy

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
147	S	yeah, married with a Beijing girl, and he is Muslim, Beijing girl is half-Muslim, he say will pick up his wife to here, he says his wife is 慈禧太后, he say like that, but what is the meaning of 慈禧太后 she is very decided and you know , at the beginning, I don't know, what is the reason he didn't say he get married, maybe now very familiar and he show me his wife's picture
157	S	nowadays, the cost of living is more and more expensive, I have back a few years, especially, the housing, the housing is the top ten in the world, so that means the people's life is better and better, that is the reason why the cost of living is higher and higher, even my niece husband, they earn a lot, but everyone on one cent left, they call 月光族, that means every month no more, every month is empty
254 255 256	Z H Z	I want to “独立” Independent lose themselves, lose and “失去自己” , they always, you know in China, some people thinks if you want to become rich or something you must enter the university , but I don't think so

Table 4.22 illustrates selected utterances identified from the conversations of the five pairs

in this study where semantic translation strategy has been adopted. A clear example is seen at turn 147, where S relates to A about an acquaintance of hers who is married to a Muslim girl from Beijing. She says that her friend described the character of the girl as very demanding. Since S did not have the necessary linguistic expression to convey the message, she switches to Mandarin and this is seen in her expression ‘慈禧太后’, in turn 147 where she translates the phrase into English as seen in her utterance ‘she is very decided and you know’. In this context, the translation strategy was effectively used to sustain the conversation.

Another example of semantic translation strategy is seen at turn 157 where speaker S who is talking about the high standard of living turns to the same strategy when she encountered difficulty in expressing herself as seen in her utterance ‘they call 月光族 , which literally means every month no more, every month is empty’. Likewise, her attempt to convey her meaning was considered successful.

Turn 254 is another example where semantic translation strategy takes place. Here Z claims that she wants to be “独立”. In response, H seeks affirmation as to whether Z means independent as shown in turn 255. And the answer was repeated by Z in turn 256 where she says more about ‘losing oneself’. At turn 256, we can see the occurrence of translation strategy again emerging when Z t says ‘lose themselves, lose and’ being unable to continue she reverts to using Mandarin as seen in the phrase ‘失去自己’ .

Referring to the examples above, it can be seen that all of the translations in bold are at the

semantic level. Most speakers who do not know how to convey the actual message in English resort to translating directly from Chinese. At turn 147 and 157, the speakers express themselves in Chinese first and then translate from Chinese into English but at turn 256, speaker Z uttered in English first and is then followed immediately with a translation in Mandarin.

4.2.6 Circumlocution strategy

Circumlocution means using a lot of or too many words to state something which can be said in a short and brief manner. Tarone (1983:62) considers the strategy to be one where the learner describes the characteristics or elements of the object or action instead of using the appropriate target language item or structure. L2 learners have no choice because of their linguistic impediment at some point.

Bialystok (1990) provides an example of her study of French learners which illustrates this very clearly. In attempting to define bench, a learner came up with "... a little wooden chair..." "To rest your legs if you are tired...it doesn't have a back". Similarly, Varadi (1983: 95) says that his study showed learners saying "special toys for children" as references to balloon, and "line for drying wet clothes" as reference for the clothesline. Circumlocution occurs when the speaker describes or exemplifies the target object or action. In order to induce the occurrences of circumlocutions, it would be better to provide the key topics and concepts in L1 which are likely to affect the subject in their attempt to deal with the target language. In this study, there was no expectation to find many examples of circumlocution because it was not hypothesised as a common strategy of Chinese students. However, 4 instances of circumlocutions were discovered. The examples are

shown below:

Table 4.23: Utterances with circumlocution strategy

Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Target item
103	P	Go to work, and come out, the time	Peak hour
125	M	I don't know how to say in English, yeah, I like ask questions, do you know I married with whom, and I told them I will go to and he told me before I came here, you will go to other county	Fortune teller
138	W	When I take my flight to China, I arrive Shenzhen first, from there to Xian	Transfer
235	A	No mother, no father, just throw away	orphan

Table 4.23 illustrates selected utterances identified in this study which show the use of circumlocution strategy. Circumlocution strategy occurs when the speaker describes or exemplifies the target object or action. The reason for this lies in the speaker's limited vocabulary in L2 which does not include a term for the object or action to be used in the conversation. As a result, he/she resorts to an attempt of exemplifying or describing it in the target language. One clear example of circumlocution strategy is seen at turn 103 where speaker P who is unable to say 'peak hour', exemplifies the phrase by saying 'Go to work, and come out, the time'.

Another example is seen at turn 125, where M who wants to say 'fortune teller' resorts to exemplifying the word as seen 'I don't know how to say in English, yeah, I like ask questions, do you know I married with whom, and I told them I will go to and he told me

before I came here, you will go to other county’. Here M who is unable to say the word ‘fortune teller’ is trying to explain the nature of the fortune teller’s role in predicting a person’s future.

At turn 138, speaker W describes the word ‘transfer’ with the phrase ‘When I take my flight to China, I arrive Shenzhen first, from there to Xian’.

At turn 235, speaker A also uses the circumlocution strategy where being unable to express the word ‘orphan’, she attempts to define the word in her own way and this is seen in her utterance ‘No mother, no father, just throw away’. The circumlocution strategy is commonly introduced with procedural vocabulary in sections on describing objects or gadgets or giving definitions. This is a fairly pedagogically sound strategy as procedural vocabulary helps the speakers to achieve communication goals as shown in table 4.23. The section below now proceeds to looking at non-linguistic signal as communicative strategies.

4.2.7 Non-linguistic signals strategy

Non-linguistic signals refer to non-verbal communication which plays a central role in human behaviour and it is important to recognize that communication frequently involves more than a verbal message. Effective communication requires that we understand the role of nonverbal behaviour as one dimension of communication competence. Non-verbal communication includes facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, body posture and motions, and positioning within groups. It may also include the way we wear our clothes or the silence we keep. For example, the thumbs up and joined forefinger/thumb are well-

established signs for “OK” in the U.S. and United Kingdom, just as raising one’s first two fingers means “Victory.” In other cultures, though, both gestures have offensive meanings.

Wertheim (1998) states that nonverbal communication cues can play five roles:

Repetition : They can repeat the message the person is making verbally

Contradiction: They can contradict a message the individual is trying to convey

Substitution: They can substitute for a verbal message. For example, a person's eyes can often convey a far more vivid message than words.

Complementing : They may add to or complement a verbal message. A boss who pats a person on the back in addition to giving praise can increase the impact of the message

Accenting : They may accent or underline a verbal message. Pounding the table, for example, can underline a message.

In this study, there are evidences of non-linguistic/non-verbal communication signals being used. The researcher was able to detect these as the conversations were video recorded. Table 4.24 shows some of the examples of non-linguistic signals found in this study.

Table 4.24: Examples of utterances with Non-linguistic signal strategy

Turn	Speaker	Utterance
35	C	(NV-nod head) ok
36	D	so how about you
46	Z	(NV-smile) but if I do my PHD, maybe I can't find my husband, eh, in China, has a sentence, eh, a women is PHD, cannot find husband
109	H	am I stupid
110	Z	yeah(NV-smile)
326	Z	because in Malaysia, I am the most beautiful girl, you know, my classmate Ali, and Arabic people told me, sarinina, you are the most beautiful girl, Chinese girl (NV- smile), I think so, it is true (NV - smile)
388	C	yeah
389	M	all of the girls (NV-smile) you know, last time

Table 4.24 illustrates a string of samples extracted from the entire study. The non-linguistic signals are highlighted. The non-verbal strategies found in this study are smiles and nodding of the head. Smiling and nodding of the head are used for approving something said and to show support to what they are listening and these can be seen at turn 35. Smiles are used in this study as non-linguistic signals which indicate acceptance and kindness to others as shown in all the turns above from 35, 46, 110, 326 and 389. If there are no smiles during casual conversation, it will signify that the conversation will not last long as the topic has not captured the interests of the speakers. A little smile will make the situation different and so make the conversation more lively. Eye contact is an important aspect of

communication and in this study, it was found to be the most common non-verbal communication strategy used by the participants. It is a direct and powerful form of non-verbal communication which is quite common during conversations. Further, eye contact illustrates a sign of respect for the others just as a nod or a smile indicates that the listener is attentively listening to the conversation.

Having discussed the communicative strategies identified from this study, the section below will aim to illustrate the frequency in usage of certain communication strategies. Although it cannot be claimed to be a precise measurement of the various strategies employed by the participants, it can be safely said that the frequency count detected of these communicative strategies are confined within the context of this study only. It is possible that the researcher may have overlooked other strategies which could affect the outcome in terms of frequency count.

4.3 Frequency of communication strategies used

Table 4.25 and figure 4.4 show the frequency of Communication Strategies detected in this study. The frequency of communication strategies used by the participants is tabulated according to the most used strategy to the least used strategy as the data reveal.

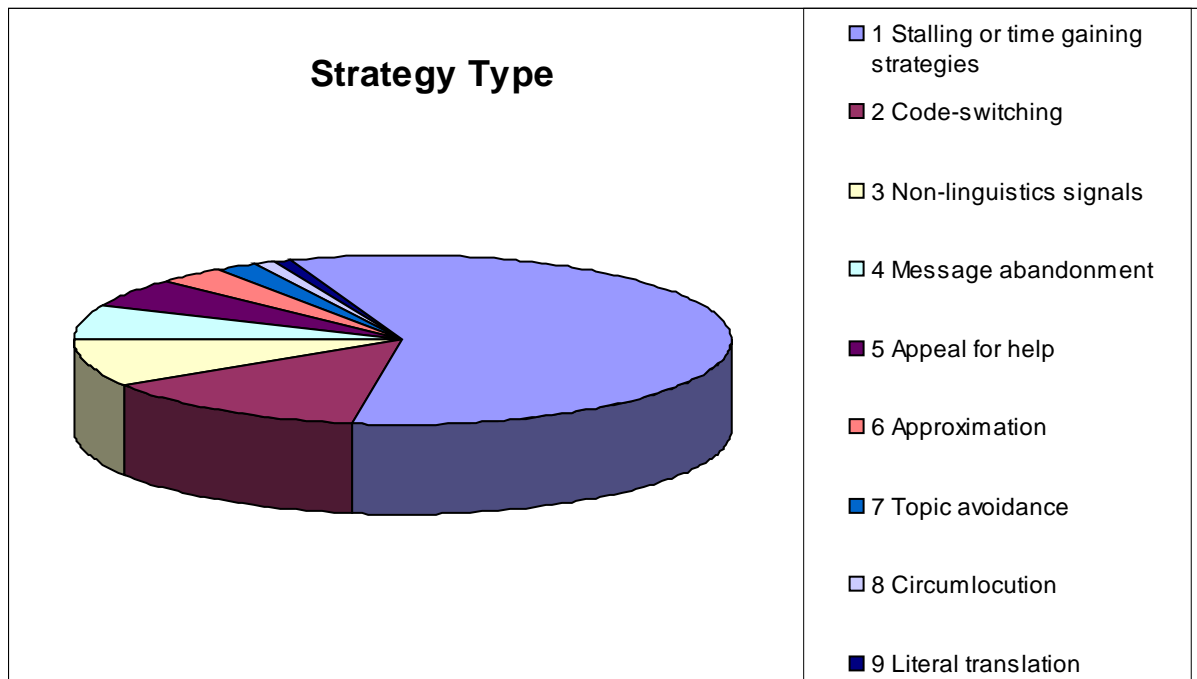
Before discussing the findings of the frequency, it is necessary to understand two important things. Firstly as stated under the methodology section, a turn here means the complete utterance. It could be just one word, a phrase, a sentence, more than a sentence or a combination of these. Thus, it is actually the whole part spoken by one speaker after the other speaker has spoken. The second thing to bear in mind is that some of these turns

could be discussed under more than one communicative strategy as the speaker might have employed more than one strategy in his/her turn.

Table 4.25: Overview of Communication Strategies used by the 5 pairs of students in this study (frequency count)

No.	Strategy type	Number of utterances By using CS	Frequency (%)
1	Stalling or time gaining	202	58.05%
2	Code-switching	47	13.50%
3	Non-linguistics signals	31	8.90%
4	Message abandonment	24	6.90%
5	Appeal for help	19	5.46%
6	Approximation	11	3.16%
7	Topic avoidance	7	2.01%
8	Circumlocution	4	1.15%
9	Literal translation	3	0.86%
	Total	348	100%

Figure 4.4: Overview of the different strategy types used by 5 pairs of students



Of the various strategies identified and presented as an adapted model from Dornyei (1986), it appears that the strategy that is most commonly used by the Chinese participants can be tabulated.

a. Stalling or time gaining strategy

This strategy amounted to 202 out of 348 times which equals 58.05% of the total communication strategies used in this study. This strategy is a spontaneous one which speakers of second language adopt. In addition, the verbal strategies of Stalling or time gaining strategy was most rampant when used with fillers the irony of it is that it is an unconscious act that takes place in communication.

b. Code switching strategy

This strategy was used 47 times out of 348 times and it amounts to 13.50%. This is the second most used strategy has been used.

c. Non-linguistic verbal communication

This strategy was identified to have occurred 31 out of 348 times which equals to 8.90% of the total communication strategies used. Non-linguistic verbal communication strategy as stated earlier can be applied in all situations and at all times in any conversation.

d. Message abandonment strategy

This strategy was found to have occurred 24 times out of 348 times and it amounts to 6.90%. The message abandonment strategy was used almost three times more than that of topic avoidance strategy

e. Topic Avoidance strategy

This strategy was found to have occurred less than the above and it amounted to only 2.01%. It is used less frequently than message abandonment which occurs 24 times out of all the utterances.

f. Appeal for help strategy

This strategy was used 19 times in this study and it amounts to a total of 5.46% of the entire communication strategies used.

g. Circumlocution strategy

This strategy appeared only 4 times and it amounts to 1.15% indicating that it is not as popular as the others listed above.

h. Literal translation strategy

The least used strategy is the strategy of *literal translation*. *Literal translation* as previously discussed comprises of both lexical and semantic translation but only semantic translation used by the students in this study. Semantic translation strategy used by the students in this study amounts to 0.86%.

4.4: Problems faced by Chinese Students in using English for Communication

An analysis of the data obtained from the five pairs of students in this study provided not only information on the communication strategies employed but also indicated clearly some of the problems faced by the students in the process of communicating in English. One of the most common problems is the limited mastery they have of the English language. Even though English is important for students in China for attending lectures, writing reports and assignments irrespective of whether they are studying at the colleges or universities, they seldom speak English in campus or in classrooms. It appears then that there are three main problems these students face in using English.

4.4.1: Limited vocabulary

Their limited vocabulary is one of the main problems faced in communication and as a result, they resort to the various communication strategies such as circumlocution (as shown in table 4.23), translation (as shown in table 4.15 and table 4.16), code switching (as shown in table 4.22), appeal for help (as shown in table 4.17 and table 4.18) and approximation (as shown in table 4.20 and table 4.21). Although it cannot be ascertained accurately that their lack of vocabulary is the cause of their inability to communicate effectively, it seems to be the main cause of their problem as words could not be articulated well enough for their meanings to be conveyed. This is probably caused by their lack of reading materials in English which has been hampered by their lack of interactive skills

such as speaking.

4.4.2: The differences between Mandarin and English

Another common problem faced by the Chinese students is the difference in linguistic background where the huge difference between Mandarin and English had impacted on their speaking abilities in terms of using appropriate words, pronunciations and also fluency which could have been impeded by a lack in confidence and knowledge of proper tenses as English is an irregular language unlike mandarin. Further, English and Mandarin belong to two different language families (the Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan). Studies have found that many structural differences exist (CHANG, 2001: 310) for example in Mandarin as explained earlier in this chapter, there is no specific word for “do” and “does”. Consequently, the student who is competent in Mandarin would face difficulty in using the verb “do” and “does” in English as these do not exist in his/her list of vocabulary. Consequently, due to frequent usage of their L1, these verbs would be omitted in his/her utterances when articulated in English.

4.4.3: Insufficient practice

Besides the above problems, insufficient practice in oral communication in English has also attributed to the problem faced by the Chinese students. A large majority of Chinese students have very little idea on how to cope with speaking in English when faced by linguistic problems in communication. This factor is probably due to the teaching methodology adopted in China as discussed in Chapter One. Many Chinese teachers use the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) (Kim, 1982) in their classes and the method does not

focus on the oral/ aural skills which can be crucial for effective communication in English. Thus when students face difficulties, it will undoubtedly result in the termination of a conversation. This probably explains why the message abandonment and topic avoidance communication strategies are so prevalent among the participants. In addition to these strategies, stalling/ time gaining strategies, non-linguistic signals and appeal for help strategies were also used more predominantly.

4.5 Summary

In summing up this chapter, it can be said that students from China who participate in interactive communication are risk takers. This is shown in the data collected, where they attempt to expand their limited language resources by using different types of strategies as a way of getting their message across. Yule (1985) and Tarone (1990) have suggested that learners should use all their available resources in order to communicate without being afraid of making errors; that is, they should be encouraged to take risks without worrying about making mistakes. However, it is believed that there has been little encouragement from the language teacher for students to be reinforced with all types of communication strategies. It needs to be remembered that avoidance strategies, such as topic avoidance, message abandonment, and compensatory strategy do not enhance language acquisition (Rababah, 2004). Therefore, they should be discouraged. However, compensatory strategies such as appeal for help, use of all purpose words and approximation may be encouraged. Other communication strategies such as circumlocution, literal translation and non-linguistic signal strategy may also help students to negotiate meaning, and this may facilitate second language acquisition.

Most of all students need to be taught communication strategies so as to equip them with the ability to sustain communication. Some researchers (e.g., Dörnyei 1995; Dörnyei and Thurrell 1991; Tarone 1984) advocate the teaching of communication strategies for enhancing second language acquisition with the hope that they can serve the ultimate goal of language communication. Faucette (2001: 6) states that communication strategies would serve as excellent means for less proficient learners who can then use them as tools to maintain the conversation and this can result in various opportunities for such students to receive more language input and thus improve their language output ability. Indeed, if language learners are not prepared to employ the language and the various interactive strategies at their disposal, it is unlikely that they will be able to develop their communicative abilities (Shehadeh, 1999: 628). Swain's (1980) output theory proposes that language learning actually occurs when students stretch their current interlanguage capacity to fill the gaps with knowledge. From Shehadeh's position, progression in language learning is thus deemed impossible without the experience of knowledge gaps and the way to bridge them. Having noted the importance of communication strategies in language acquisition, the current study has shown its focus on how China students attempted to use these to overcome their linguistic handicaps which they experience in interactive communications. The purpose of this study was to provide new empirical data regarding their use, since this area of research is gaining more attention than ever before.