

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify the communicative strategies the foreign waiters used to compensate for their low English language proficiency, and to describe the methods foreign waiters use to acquire sufficient proficiency in the target second language in the absence of formal instructions (e.g., organized English classes for the waiters).

The bulk of this study comprises a detailed report on the observation and evaluation of the participants involved in terms of the communication strategies they employ in order to comprehend and be comprehended while on the job. However, part of the study will be reporting on the approaches they used to improve their proficiency in the target language in the absence of formal language learning instructions.

The data were obtained through two informal interview forms and eight observation forms for each participant. The data obtained was categorized and analyzed qualitatively based on the themes listed in the two interviews (as listed in Section 3.2). Simple frequency counts and percentages were calculated to establish the number of times particular strategies are used. The following sections will present the results of the analysis of the data obtained.

4.1 Analysis of Data Obtained from the Interview Form 1

In the first interview the participants were asked the questions on their background, including their English language learning experiences and their aspirations and preparations before coming to Malaysia. Due to their limited English language proficiency, an

interpreter was present throughout the interviews to help ask, explain and/or interpret the interview material for the participants. Table 4.1 provides the information obtained based on the participants' replies to the first interview questions.

Table 4.1: Analysis of Information from Form 1

	P1	P2	P3
Highest Educational Achievement	Government primary school, medium of instruction not English	Government primary school and junior secondary 1 st year, medium of instruction not English, Private junior secondary 2 nd and 3 rd years, medium of instruction English	Government 1 st , 2 nd , and 3 rd years of primary school, medium of instruction not English
English exposure in home country	Picked up English over 2 years at workplace in home country	Picked up English at 3 rd year of private junior secondary	Picked up English over 3 years at workplace in home country
Self perception of English communication	Does not think he can communicate in English well	Thinks he can communicate in English to a certain extent	Does not think he can communicate in English well
Language preparations prior to arrival	No preparations	No preparations	No preparations
Expectations of communication demands at workplace	Thinks English is medium of communication at work and he should improve	Thinks he needs to improve faster to better do better communicate with his boss and the customers and to qualify to apply for a better job	Thinks he should improve his English fast
Plans on communication at workplace	Asking customers for translation and colleague for either of translation or help	Learning needed words expressions related to his job faster to better improve	Asking his colleagues for translation or help
Communication problems upon arrival	Communicating with airport officials, getting a taxi finding a place to stay, finding a job	Difficult to find a better job	Communicating with airport officials, finding a job, travelling around Kuala Lumpur
Strategies used to overcome problems	Looking for and finding a Bangladeshi fellow who could speak English	Getting the waiter job temporarily till he improves his English good enough to qualify for a better job	Finding a friend who knows a little English to he help him get settled

As can be seen in Table 4.1, the three participants are not highly educated and from among them only P2 had been to a private school, wherein the medium of instruction had been English, for two years. Unlike P2, P1 and P3 had picked up English at their workplaces. While P2 thinks that he can communicate in English, P1 and P3 do not seem to share the same belief and think instead that they will not be able to communicate well in English. None of the participants has made any preparations in terms of language prior to coming to Malaysia.

P1 and P3 had experienced the same problems due to difficulties in communication in English resulting from their limited language proficiency (e.g., communicating with the airport officials, taking a taxi, etc.). However, all of the participants think that they have to improve their English because they have the same expectation that communication at their workplace is carried out in English. P2's concerns seem to be different as he opts for more proficiency in English to apply for a better job while P1 and P3 think they will be better off if they could communicate better in English while on the job at their present workplace.

Assessment of the participants' language proficiency show that they could communicate at different levels in English. P2 proved to be more proficient in English than P1 and P3. All in all, all the three participants could not convey their messages over in English quite successfully and while speaking they were facing breakdowns in the course of their speech. Details of the language assessment on the three participants are presented below.

Participant 1

Based on the iBT TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics (See Appendix 4), P1's proficiency is estimated to be (1) on the grading scale. A more detailed analysis of P1's performance is as follows.

Extract P1a: Incoherence

i) “I lucky...uh... Bangladeshi guy from my country in airport, mm..., he help for taxi...and...taxi driver...mm... I ask...”

ii) “Pass...passport...I give...why...I come...Malaysia”

Evaluation and analysis of his speech indicates that: Generally P1’s responses to the demanded tasks in the first interview were very limited in content. His responses were not clear and the sentences he produced lacked coherence; that is, they were hardly related to the task and this made his speech unintelligible. He was talking in fragments and his speech was marked by intermittent pauses, which required a considerable amount of listening effort to understand his words. This was getting especially more difficult as the questions were getting more complex and were demanding more explanations on the part of P1.

Extract P1b: Incorrect stress

i) Air`port instead of `Airport

ii) `Hotel instead of Ho`tel

iii) Thir`ty instead of `Thirty

P1’s speech was marked by the inability to spontaneously respond to the questions asked. During the whole interview session the interpreter was intervening to help P1 understand the questions better or to explain P1’s responses on his behalf. P1 could not figure out much of what he was listening to in English (e.g., he was frequently asking for the interview questions to be repeated and any time he could not understand them the interpreter was explaining the questions to him in his mother tongue). In other words, he did not have trained ears for differing accents. P1’s delivery of speech was not consistent.

He could not pronounce the words correctly or put the stresses on the words on the appropriate syllables.

Extract P1c: Limited vocabulary

- i) “Big problem ...for...for...airport...uh...taxi, speak with **police**...”
- ii) “Airport...very people...mm...very **bags**...”

From the responses to the tasks, it was evident that his reservoir of vocabulary was small and his mastery of the grammatical rules was very limited. For example when he was relating the problems he faced upon arrival, he had word finding difficulties and he substituted ‘police’ for ‘immigration officer’:

Extract P1d: Use of hedges

- i) “I ...uh ... question...no no...ask ...uh...my friend to help...”
- ii) “English... I...uh...learn...uh...in...Bangladesh...but...I...uh...little English...”

In Extract P1d, he presented some words with finding difficulties. He was also observed to be trying to self-monitor most of the time by trying to talk very slowly and using hedges in the effort of constructing comprehensible sentences. Moreover, his speech was not fluid as he used many pauses in between words. Extract P1d illustrates P1’s attempt at answering Question 6 on Form 1.

Extract P1e: Code switching

“school...I...mm...go...in...uh...Bangladesh...mm...Government...school...five grade...[P1 continues in Bengali]”

P1 was observed to pass looks at the interpreter whenever he was stuck to cue the interpreter to help out in the breakdowns in the course of his speech. At times, when he found it too overwhelming, he chose not to continue in English and he switched to Bengali

especially when he was answering the last three questions. This, in turn, was preventing him from expressing his ideas clearly and intelligibly.

Extract P1f: Practiced and memorized expressions

i) “couldn’t speak”

ii) “place to stay”

iii) “ask for help”

P1’s responses were partly marked by practiced and memorized expressions. This inference is drawn from the evidence that he proved more fluid when saying some particular expressions and cluster of words. Moreover, the same expressions were repeated a considerable number of times, in the same form.

Extract P1g: Limited content knowledge

i) “...problem big for airport... uh... taxi... speak with police...uh... and...and...find place to stay... also...also...problem... uh...problem find a job...”

P1’s ability to develop the topics was marred by his limited content knowledge. Generally speaking, he was not able to expand his speech due to his inability to go beyond the basic and general ideas. However, it could also be possible that his limited vocabulary and his insufficient mastery of English grammar rules were preventing him to fully express his ideas.

Extract P1h: Repetitions

i) “... also...also...problem...speak with...speak with...people problem...uh...problem...”

Frequent repetitions showed that he was unable to sustain speech to fulfill the required the task. The repetitions simply showed that P1 was struggling to express more ideas or trying to find the right words to continue his speech.

Participant 2

According to the iBT TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics, the results of the first interview for P2 is estimated to be (2) on the grading scale. It means that his responses were sometimes addressing the topic; however, his development of each topic was so limited that it often became unclear to understand what P2 was trying to say.

Extract P2a: Intelligible speech despite problems with overall clarity

i) “I come to airport...uh...and... talk to officer... uh...I...take taxi...uh...also asked... uh... I...asked...for...uh...hotel...”

A general description of P2’s performance indicates that his responses addressed the demanded task, but the way he developed the topics of the questions fell behind a successful and sophisticated communication. Although limited, his speech turned out to be intelligible. However, his responses contained problems of overall clarity and coherent delivery as illustrated in Extract P2a.

Extract P2b: Incorrect stress

- i) Offi`cer instead of `Officer
- ii) Diffi`cult instead of `Difficult
- iii) `Understand instead of Under`stand

In terms of delivery of speech, P2 was partly intelligible most of the times. Although he made efforts to be clearer, instable pace and awkward intonation and articulation were making the meaning obscured at times. As such, he grappled with problems related to bad pronunciation and unclear articulation as illustrated in Extract P2b.

Extract P2c: Limited vocabulary

i) “I ask...uh... guy from hotel... uh...and...and I paid money to hotel guy... uh... also... I ask about café”

P2’s performance showed that his application of grammar rules and vocabulary was limited. There were times that he could not fully express his ideas due to limitations in his grammar knowledge and range of vocabulary. For example, when he was describing some of the communication problems he faced in the answer to the seventh question (Could you describe some of the communication problems you faced when you first arrived in Malaysia?), he could not provide many examples. As can be seen in Extract P2c, P2 obviously did not know the word “receptionist” and addresses him instead as “hotel guy.”

Extract P2d: Use of hedges

i) “I...uh...think...I...uh...need...mm...good English”

ii) “...and I...uh...need...and...I...uh...need talk...”

iii) “...and...uh...and...uh...necessary...uh...to understand...customers...and boss”

P2’s speech was marked by the use of hedges and repetitious pauses which marred the flow of words. The hedges were more frequent in P2’s answers to the last three questions, as they were demanding more explanations.

Extract P2f: Practiced and memorized expressions

i) “I come to airport”

ii) “I come to Malaysia”

iii) “He asked about”

iiii) “I asked about”

P2's mastery over the basic stock sentence structures and simple expressions was evident as seen in his ability to use these mostly in relaying his intended messages. Transcripts of P2's speech show that he was more fluid when he was using structures with simple present tenses. It appears that he may have practiced or memorized some basic stock sentences and common expressions.

Extract P2g: Simple conjunctions

i) "... I ask about café...also...mm...and...about find a room... which... no rent a room uh...and...also...cheap...not far and..."

The analysis also provided evidence that P2's way of connecting sentences was very awkward as he was using simple conjunctions.

Extract P2h: Limited content knowledge

i) "I...uh...decide be waiter and...uh...make my English better...Then I could...uh...I have...the better job...maybe sales guy..."

ii) "I talked...uh...speak to officer...from airport...uh...uh... I talk with him... for...mm...vi... visa...he ask question for...for... what I do... uh..."

iii) "I can have...uh...better job"

iiii) "I...can have...sale job...uh...mm...saleman...if...if...I...have English better..."

Extract P2g is a chunk of P2's answers to some of the questions of the first interview. The answers show that in terms of topic development, P2's responses could be generally considered as related to the demanded task. However, he was far from producing sufficient ideas related to the topic and developing them sophisticatedly. Elaboration on the topics was relevant to the simplicity and/or difficulty of the ideas presented. He was at ease with the simple ones and provided more elaboration on simple ideas in very simple language.

However, sentences he was producing in relation to the tasks were not always clearly structured and the cohesion between the ideas was not that strong. Nevertheless, this did not affect the communication too much. The interpreter, here, did not have to intervene very much as he did while interviewing P1. He was more helping in rephrasing what P2 was saying in clearer English.

Extract P2h: Repetitions

i) “I need talk in English because...uh...because...Malaysia people come restaurant and...and...uh...mm...”

ii) “...talk English...English with me...and with my...friends...so...so...I...”

Analysis of P2’s speech shows him repeating some words in the course of his speech. This possibly could be related to P2’s attempts to gain more time while thinking to find better words to continue.

Participant 3

Based on the iBT TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics, the results of the first interview for P3 is estimated to be (1) on the grading scale. In the following, extracts of P3’s performance are presented with explanations to show how P3’s score was estimated.

Extract P3a: Incoherence

i) “My country ...uh...is...in Bangladesh...uh...mm...my work...uh... waiter...my work restaurant KL...I...uh...”

ii) “...very very problem...in...uh...in...airport...English no good...security...I cannot talk he...English I...very very bad...cannot talk...he...uh...ask my passport...”

A general analysis of P3's performance showed that his responses to the tasks are very limited in substance and least connected to the questions. The results, also, showed that he was not that intelligible and his responses minimally addressed the demanded task. The details of his performance include a description of his ability to deliver his ideas through his speech, his mastery over the English language and his ability to develop the topics and ideas put forward by the questions in the interview form.

In terms of delivery of speech, P3 was seen to be unable to manage a fluid and fluent speech. His responses were not clear and the sentences he produced lacked coherence; that is, they were hardly related to the task and this made his speech unintelligible. He was talking in fragments and his speech was marked by intermittent pauses, which required a considerable amount of listening effort to comprehend.

Extract P3b: Incorrect stress and awkward pronunciation

- i) `Because instead of Be`cause
- ii) Ea`sny instead of `Easy

Awkward pronunciation also made it difficult to understand him easily and more effort was needed to concentrate on his speech to make out the words and ideas simultaneously. He pronounced the words in a distorted and unclear manner. Intonation and stress rules of English language were least evident in his speech. He had problem pronouncing the phone /zh/ as in usually which he pronounced as /s/.

Extract P3c: Limited vocabulary

- i) "I...have friend. He...uh from Dhaka...he...also from...my city...he know very...very English...talk ok...he talk...he say...he find room...I have room...people in my room..."

P3's use of language showed that he did not have a considerable mastery of English. His range of vocabulary was very limited and his frequent grammatically ill-formed structures proved limitations in his control of grammar rules. Therefore, he was not able to make proper connections between the expression of ideas and connecting them. In other words, he was not giving full expression to his ideas due to his limited knowledge of English. As can be seen in Extract P3c, he obviously substituted "roommate" with "people in my room".

Extract P3d: Use of hedges

i) "...he...uh...talk with boss...uh...and...uh...boss say...uh...say ok...I work...uh...waiter job..."

P3 was talking in fragments and his delivery of speech was choppy with frequent hedges and long hesitations. This could possibly damage the flow of speech and was making it difficult to follow what he was saying as the ideas were articulated inefficiently with intermittent pauses in between.

Extract P3e: Code switching

i) "...mm...uh...I...uh...English no good...uh...I...not study English...mm...from... my school...my English cannot cannot...very talk cannot..." [continues in Bengali].

P3 was obviously trying to talk as much as he could by resorting to various strategies (e.g., hedging, body language like miming, hand gestures and shrugging shoulders). However, when he was facing a total breakdown in the course of his speech he was passing looks at the interpreter to cue him take over and start interpreting P3's continuation of speech from Bengali into English. In the above example, P3 was trying to say what happened to him in

the airport upon arrival. Nevertheless, he just gave up speaking in English when he could not continue anymore and burst instead into Bengali.

Extract P3f : Repetition

i) “uh...I have...uh...my friend...my friend...quite good...uh...very help I...he talk good English...my friend...quite good...uh...he English good...”

ii) “... here...I...my job...uh...waiter...my friend...he helped me a lot...he talk with boss...quite good ...and ...my friend...also...he talk with owner...he very good man...”

At times, P3’s responses were not addressing the task at times. Some basic and low-level responses repeated themselves in the course of his speech (e.g., quite good, very ok); they were proof of the fact that he had memorized some formulaic expressions and were heavily drawing on them in his speech. He used to use “very” many times especially when emphasizing the seriousness of the problems he had faced.

Extract P3g: Limited content knowledge

i) “I...people in...uh...my work...talk English...in my work...help I...uh...talk people English”

ii) “...they...mm...ask...uh...food...uh...they ask...mm... drink...and...I...uh...bring it...als...I...uh...mm...talk English...always...I show menu...quite good...”

P3’s development of the topics was marked by inappropriate constructions. His treatment of the basic ideas was marked by little or weak expression through limited relevant content. His limited mastery over English made him unable to steadily sustain the flow to fulfill the communication goals. However, P3 put his limited vocabulary to the maximum use when describing his ideas, albeit limited, as can be seen in Extract P3g.

The participants' performances in answering the questions included in the First Interview Form varied from one to the other. P2 who had been exposed more to English dealt with the questions much better than the other participants. P1 and P3 were almost in the same boat as in the scores allocated to them according to the iBT Speaking Rubrics. P2 could show that he could develop the topics relatively better than P1 and P3 and deliver ideas more fluid than the other two participants. However, all the participants had continuous pauses in the flow of their speech and the range of the vocabulary they used was meager and in case of P1 and P3 it was very limited. Notwithstanding, the limited vocabulary was put to maximum use by all of the participants.

Moreover, all of the three participants were speaking English with a Bengali accent. Awkward and unclear pronunciation marked their speech which at times was making it really difficult to understand them.

4.2 Observation Sessions and Forms

The observation sessions started soon after the first interview forms were completed. The observation sessions were carried out in two-week intervals over four consecutive months. Specifically, the data obtained from the observation sessions were analyzed to ascertain the most frequent communication strategies used during the observation sessions. Earlier in the literature of this study, the most common communication strategies and their definitions and functions were presented. As stated earlier in the literature review, communication strategies could possibly be used in the course of any communication in which the parties involved are facing breakdowns in the flow their speech due to deficiencies in their language proficiency.

Jaafar (2006) opines that “ ‘in situations where the appropriate systematic target language used has not been formed,’ communication strategies are treated as attempts” by language learners to make up for the “difficulties or inadequacies they face in trying to communicate” or convey their meaning to their “communication partner” (p.121). Moreover, different definitions and groupings of the communication strategies provided by different researchers helped better understand the function of communication strategies, e.g., Tarone (1978) and Dornyei (1995).

Bialystok (1990) is of the view that “if we ignore the differences in the structure of the taxonomies by abolishing the various overall categories, then a core group of specific strategies that appear consistently across the taxonomies clearly emerges” (Dornyei, 1995, p.57). Communication strategies were proved, in the observations done in this study, to bear an enormous influence on gapping the breakdowns in the course of communications on the job in the present study.

Communication strategies in this study are, therefore, described as the application of various techniques on the part of the interlocutors involved in real time communication to overcome barriers on the way to a successful understanding. The data gathered from the observation sessions showed that the subjects were mostly using some specific set of communication strategies more frequently to compensate for the breakdowns in their speech. More specifically the data analyzed to locate, identify and name the communication strategies according to their frequency in the observations. To meet this end, the designed observation forms (See Appendix 2) were used to keep a record of the strategies used by the subjects.

Table 4.2: Strategies frequently used by the subjects throughout the observation sessions

Strategy 1	Use of hedges (time gaining strategies); overgeneralizations (all-purpose words)
Strategy 2	Use of non-linguistic means (body language, facial expressions, miming, etc.)
Strategy 3	Code switching (also known as language switching)
Strategy 4	Appealing for help or asking for meaning

The set of strategies shown in Table 4.2 were the ones used with the highest frequency throughout the observations sessions. Strategy 1 refers to the use of hesitation or gap filler devices. They are some filling words to gap pauses due to insufficient knowledge of language which prevented the speaker from being fluid; or, probably they are some fillers simply to hold the floor for some more time (e.g., well, uh, mm, etc.). This strategy is also known as “stalling” strategies according to the “Traditional Conceptualizations” (Dornyei, 1995, p.58).

Strategy 2 refers to the use of nonlinguistic devices by the speaker to convey his/her meaning through miming, facial expressions, or gestures. They are also categorized under borrowing strategies (Tarone, 1978). This may include many common or personally devised nonverbal ways of representing items or concepts (e.g. pointing to something instead of naming it).

Strategy 3 refers to the expression of the desired item or structure in the native language. They are also referred to as borrowing strategies (Tarone, 1978). However, according to Jaafar (2006) “although code switching is a type of communication strategy”, this phenomenon is used both by the low proficiency and by proficient speakers (Jaafar, 2006, p.122). Moreover, David (2007) holds that code switching is frequent among the members

of a multilingual society where ethnic languages are spoken next to the one common language.

Strategy 4 is applied when the speaker asks the addressee for help either directly (e.g. How do you say...?) or indirectly (e.g., rising intonation, pause, eye contact). Tarone (1978) includes this strategy among the borrowing strategies while Dornyei (1995, p.58) includes them in avoidance or reduction strategies according to the “traditional conceptualizations.”

Table 4.3 shows the importance and function of the strategies listed in Table 4.2 in relation to the communication events involving the three participants.

Table 4.3: Importance and function of the applied communication strategies

Strategies	Importance and function
1	Help the interlocutors maintain the thread of speech any time the interlocutors are lost for better ways of saying things or simply have a limited command of the language in which they communicate. They cue the listener in a conversation that the speaker still wants to continue.
2	Help the speaker better describe what s/he desires to say through some meaning making mimes and movements. However, people with limited mastery of a language may use it more to help facilitate their meaning making.
3	Helps the speaker resort to another language in which s/he is more proficient or which s/he is a native speaker of. The speaker then could make her/his more easily.
4	Help the speaker facilitate the communicative goal much better by asking for help from a third party. Asking for more meaning will also help the speaker understand better. Each one of asking for help from a third party or asking for more meaning from the conversant party aid the speaker reach the communicative goal.

4.3 Analysis of the Observation Forms:

Participants were each observed eight times. Each observation session lasted for one hour which was divided into six chunks of ten minutes for better accuracy. The observation forms were designed in a way to contain schedules to indicate the type and frequency of the strategy or set of strategies used in each ten minute period. The results of each session were then analyzed to look for any probable progress in their language ability during the course

of time. The following sections report on the individual observation sessions in general and more specifically they look into how the communication strategies are used in the different contexts.

4.3.1. The First Observation Session

The first observation session was conducted on 23/3/2010. Subjects were closely monitored over each ten minute period. Each session covers 6 ten minute period. The Extracts below illustrate some of the strategies used by the participants during the first observation.

Strategy 1: Use of hedges (time gaining strategies)

P1 “uh...this one...uh...don't know...mm...this...”

P2 “er...drinks?...mm...yea...the one...uh...”

P3 “this food...uh...Oh...this...mm...not have”

Strategy 2: Use of non-linguistic means

P1 Shaping his hands into different forms; raising eyebrows; pointing to objects with fingers

P2 Shrugging shoulders two or three times to show that he did not know; nodding the head; rounding the lips

P3 Showing the items in the menu by hand; shrugging the shoulders; raising eyebrows

Strategy 3: Code switching

P1 Few Bengali words: e.g., asking his colleague for “appetizer”

P2 None: he could manage to convey his meaning via other strategies without code switching. However, he did not take as many orders; thus less communication.

P3 Some Bengali words: e.g., asking his colleague for “reservation”

Strategy 4: Appealing for help or asking for meaning

P1 “Well-done? The food?” Asking a customer for clarification

P2 None: he did not ask for meaning or help from the others while taking the orders from the customers.

P3 “What is that?” asking from his supervisor

Table 4.4: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants¹⁸

OBS1	P1	P2	P3	Total
Str 1	50	45	51	146
Str 2	40	36	42	118
Str 3	18		24	42
Str 4	19		23	42

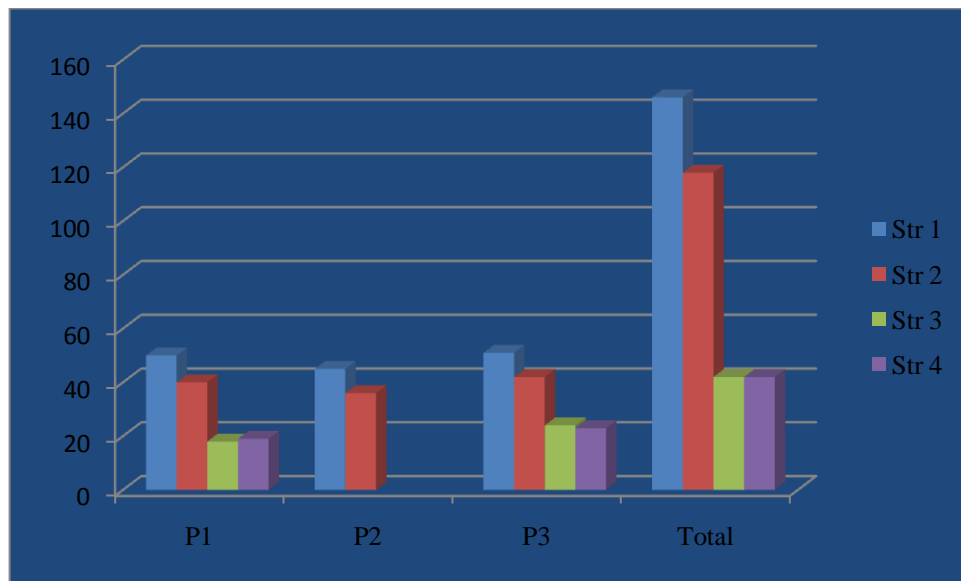


Figure 4.1: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

As seen in Table 4.4, all of the participants used communication strategies differently to make up for the breakdowns in their communication. Hedging and overgeneralizing were

¹⁸ Here in this table and in the tables that follow OBS represents the “Observations”, P the “Participants” and Str stands for the “Strategies”.

the most used communication strategies in the participants' performance. The hedges allowed the participants to gain more time while constructing responses. The consistent application of hedges and overgeneralizations shows that the participants were not fluent and for expressing their ideas they had to speak in fragments. P1 and P3 used all of the four strategies in the communication events in the first observation. P2 has used only two types of the strategies: 1 and 2. This shows that P2 did not have to code switch or ask for help, though he was not taking the orders which demanded more explanation to the customers.

4.3.2. The second observation session

The second observation session was conducted on 6/4/2010. The results show that subjects could communicate despite their limited language knowledge by applying the communication strategies.

Strategy 1: Use of hedges (time gaining strategies) and all-purposed words (over-generalizations)

- P1** "Number two...uh...hot?"; "This one"
- P2** "Which one...uh... Madam?"; "This food"
- P3** "...er...mm...maybe..."; "That thing"

Strategy 2: Use of non-linguistic means

- P1** Hand gestures; miming; nodding the head
- P2** Facial expression: knitting brows to cue the customer that he did not understand; Showing the palm to cue the customer to resume his seat while the customer presumably tried to proceed to the counter personally

P3 Explaining an item in the menu using his hands; shrugging shoulders; raising eyebrows

Strategy 3: Code switching

P1 He asked the supervisor in Bengali for “vegetable”, “today special”, etc.

P2 Asked a colleague in Bengali for “clam chowder” ordered by a customer.

P3 None: there was no need to code switch for anyone of the orders he took since he could do away with other communication strategies

Strategy 4: Appealing for help or asking for meaning

P1 Asking a senior colleague for help while taking an order to talk to the customer

P2 “What is sugar free?” asking a customer for more clarification

P3 “Steamed?” asking a customer for what she meant by “Steamed fish”

Table 4.5: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

OBS 2	P1	P2	P3	Total
Str 1	50	43	51	144
Str 2	39	35	40	114
Str 3	17	6		23
Str 4	18	10	20	48

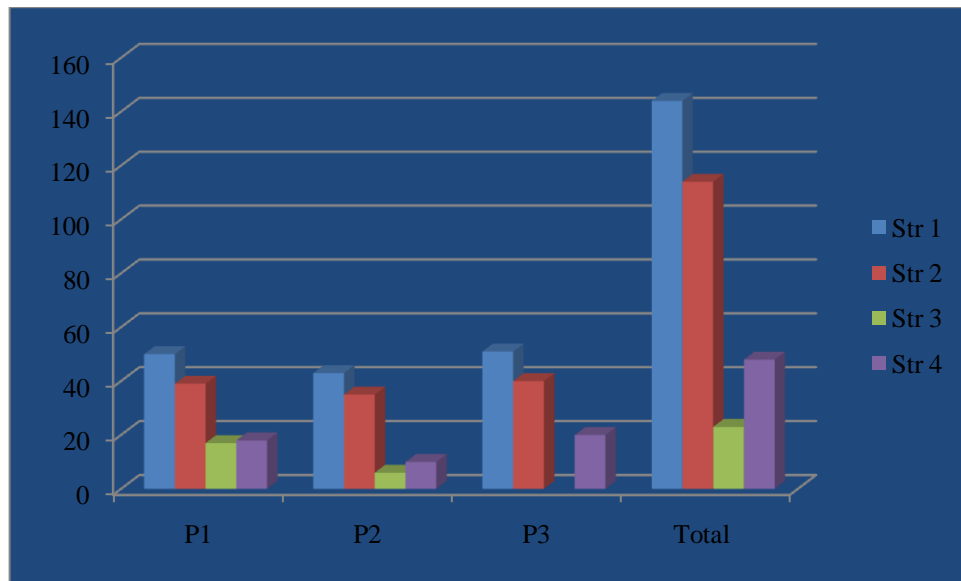


Figure 4.2: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

As the figure 4.2 shows, the participants used the communication strategies in different ways. P1 and P2 used all of the strategies in the communication events they were involved in. P3 was not observed to codeswitch since he did not face any demanding order that required clarification in Bengali. All of the participants used strategy 1 more than the other strategies: they still had pauses in between of their speech. Second to strategy one was strategy 2: non-linguistic means. They were using a variety of body gestures to help facilitate their communication acts. Moreover, the participants would ask customers or colleague for the meaning of the words or expressions they did not know.

4.3.3. The Third Observation Session

The third observation session was conducted on 20/4/2010. The third observation results show that subjects were using the alternative ways to make meaning when faced with problems taking orders from customers.

Strategy 1: Use of hedges (time gaining strategies) and all-purposed words (over-generalizations)

- P1** “this one...uh...chicken...”
- P2** “this one sir...uh...I need check...mm...ok”
- P3** “this...uh...juice”

Strategy 2: Use of non-linguistic means

- P1** Shaking his head
- P2** Miming: using hands to explain more
- P3** Miming “straw” to a customer

Strategy 3: Code switching

- P1** Asking for “cod” in Bengali from his supervisor.
- P2** None: he almost took the orders in English and for any probable breakdown resorted to other alternative strategies
- P3** Asking for “steak” in Bengali from his supervisor

Strategy 4: Appealing for help or asking for meaning

- P1** “How say this?” asking a senior colleague
- P2** “What...uh...is that?” asking his supervisor
- P3** Asking a senior colleague for help while explaining the menu to a customer.

Table 4.6: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

OBS 3	P1	P2	P3	Total
Str 1	48	44	52	144
Str 2	39	34	38	111
Str 3	17		2	19
Str 4	19	9	20	48

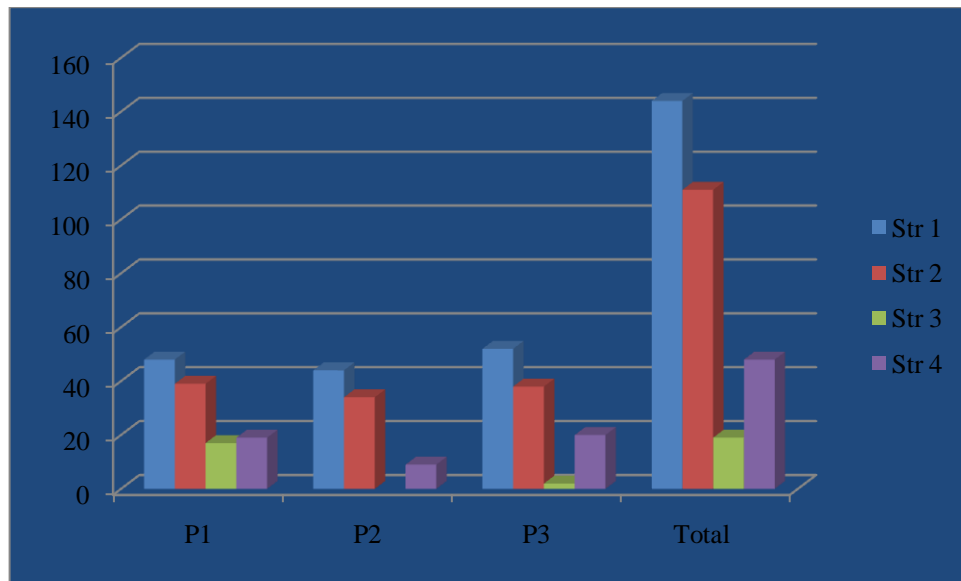


Figure 4.3: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

According to the figure 4.3 the participants used communication strategies in different ways to bridge the gaps in their communications. Among the three participants P2, did not codeswitch at all, while P1 and P3 codeswitched in some cases. P3 used more hedges in the course of his speech than the other participants. As in the previous sessions, using hedges to gain more time, while communicating with customers, was the most frequent strategy used. The results show that P2 is using communication strategies less than the other two participants in his communication events. However, results bear proof that strategies 1 and 2 are used more than the others. This could be due to the participants' attempts to manage their communications on their own and least frequently resorting to seek help or to codeswitch.

4.3.4. The Fourth Observation Session

The fourth observation session was conducted on 4/5/2010. The fourth observation results show that subjects could communicate despite their limited language knowledge by applying the appropriate communication strategies.

Strategy 1: Use of hedges (time gaining strategies) and all-purpose words (over-generalizations)

- P1 “It?...uh...fourteen...uh...I check first”
- P2 “which one...uh...you want? this? Or...uh...that?”
- P3 “I...uh...check...orange...juice...uh...one...uh...and...”

Strategy 2: Use of non-linguistic means

- P1 Facial expressions: smile; miming: using hands to provide more explanation
- P2 Turning around to point to the counter; knitting eyebrows; miming: shaping hands
- P3 Facial expressions: raising eyebrows; shrugging shoulders; waving hands

Strategy 3: Code switching

- P1 Asking a colleague for “fruit cocktail” in Bengali
- P2 None: the orders he was taking were not so demanding
- P3 Asking his supervisor in Bengali for help when a customer asked him: “what special do you have for the main course?”

Strategy 4: Appealing for help or asking for meaning

- P1 “what...uh...is it?”
- P2 “how ...you...how you say it?”
- P3 Asking a senior colleague for help while taking an order

Table 4.7: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

OBS 4	P1	P2	P3	Total
Str 1	50	44	50	144
Str 2	38	35	38	111
Str 3	17		2	19
Str 4	15	8	20	43

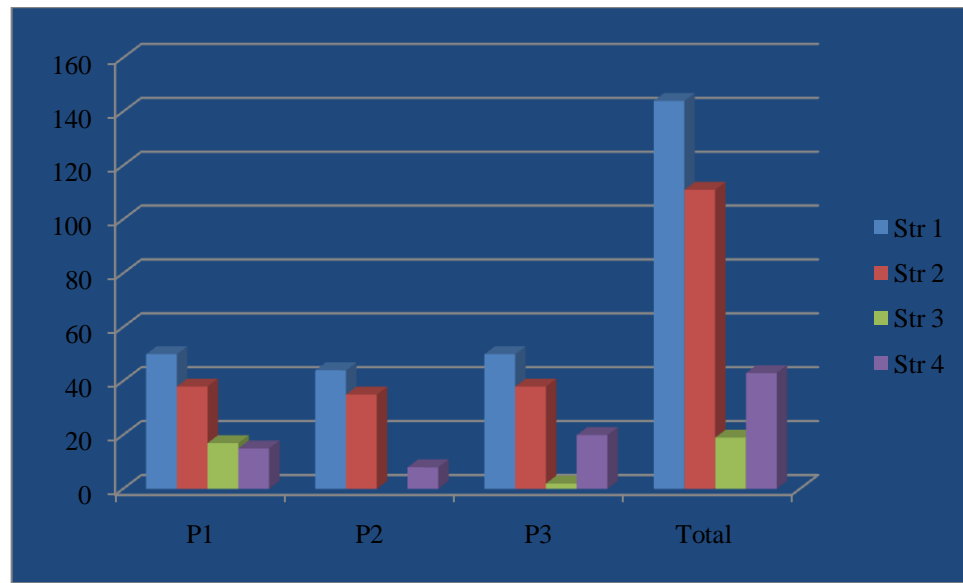


Figure 4.4: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

As seen in the figure 4.7, in the fourth observation sessions the participants frequently applied the communication strategies in the communication events to reach their communicative goals. The participants used strategy 1 more than the other strategies. Using body language to bridge the gaps was frequently observed in the participants' performances. While P2 was observed not to codeswitch at all, the other participants were cutting down on resorting to Bengali less and less. The participants were getting used to asking for the meaning from their colleagues or even the customers anytime they face some unknown expressions.

Up to now, the participants had been observed for four sessions with two week intervals between each session. This is halfway to the end of the observation period. So far, the results show that communication strategies had been used for real by the participants to overcome barriers on the way to their successful communication. The figures and the tables show that strategy 1 has been the most frequent one used in the course of the four sessions

of observation. However, strategy 2 comes second in the order of the most frequently used strategies.

Throughout, participants were getting more used to asking for the meaning from the customers and the colleagues instead of frequent and instant codeswitching. P2 showed some improvements in the way he was communicating with customers: he was not codeswitching that often towards as number of observations was approaching to four. P1 and P3 were improving at different paces with P1 a little better than P3.

However, the participants were predominantly applying these four strategies in the course of the first four observations. They were not observed to use any new strategies and instead they were observed showing signs of improvement in applying the communication strategies: they were resorting to Bengali immediately anytime they faced a breakdown in the communication events in the beginning. Participants in the later sessions were asking more for meaning from the customers and the colleagues rather than codeswitching into Bengali.

It is possible to say that participants were switches into Bengali so unconsciously while they were more consciously asking for meaning in their communication events as the observation sessions progressed. The following sentences, the details of the second half of the observation course which like the first half comprises four sessions which were conducted at two weeks intervals.

4.3.5. The Fifth Observation Session

The fifth observation session was carried out on 18/5/2010. The results obtained from the fifth observation show that subjects could manage the communication events while on the

job in English by the use of the communication strategies. However, there were some fluctuations in the participants' use of the communication strategies. The details of the fifth observation are presented in the following:

Strategy 1: Use of hedges (time gaining strategies) and all-purposed words (over-generalizations)

P1 "...mm...ok ok...but...uh...this one...we don't have"; "this drink?"

P2 "...it is a...uh...Malay food...uh...yea...good food"; "those...uh..."

P3 "...ok...that...mm...the one...uh... served"; "these fresh"

Strategy 2: Use of non-linguistic means

P1 Facial gestures: rounding the lips and looking aside to show that he is pensive

P2 Hand gestures: high five with fingers tight together when greeting a customer

P3 Miming drinking to ask a customer for their order of drink

Strategy 3: Code switching

P1 Asking a colleague in Bengali for help

P2 Very few Bengali words: asking for "topping up a sandwich" from his supervisor"

P3 Some few Bengali words: asking for "almond" and "pickles"

Strategy 4: Appealing for help or asking for meaning

P1 Asking for help from a colleague to help with taking an order

P2 "How you spell it?" asking from a customer

P3 "sorry sir, again" asking the customer for repeating the words

Table 4.8: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

OBS 5	P1	P2	P3	Total
Str 1	47	44	50	141
Str 2	37	33	38	108
Str 3	15	2	3	20
Str 4	15	9	17	41

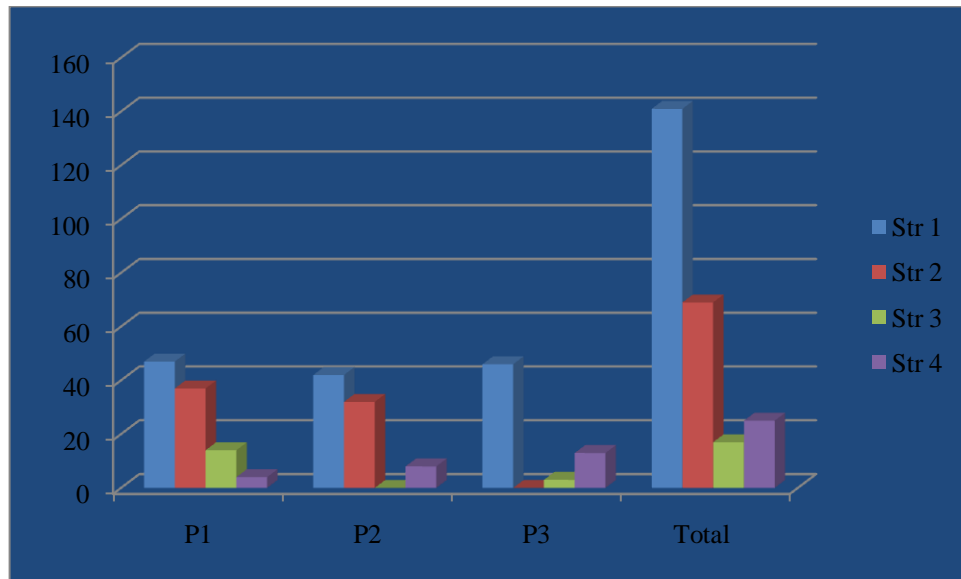


Figure 4.5: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

The results of the fifth observation session show that the participants were generally cutting down on the number of times they were using strategy 1 and 2. They were asking for meaning from the customers and they showed a better control of the body movements in their communication. The body movements they were using as strategies were getting more sophisticated; that is, the participants were not moving their hands or doing facial gestures times and over in vain. Herein, they were more focused and to the point. Among the three participants, P1 codeswitched the most. He was taking some demanding orders which included some difficult words and expressions. P2 was observed to codeswitch for twice when he could not convey himself in English. In the fifth observation, the participants,

however, were still asking for meaning from their customers or their colleagues. P1 and P3 were asking for help when they could not take the order properly.

4.3.6. The Sixth Observation Session

The sixth observation session was conducted on 1/6/2010. The results obtained from the fifth observation show that subjects were getting used to more ask for meaning as they were getting better at using more English and they were seemingly more interested to ask for things they did not know personally and in English.

Strategy 1: Use of hedges (time gaining strategies) and all-purposed words (over-generalizations)

P1 “you like...uh...”; “it...uh...yes it is”

P2 “wait sir...uh...two chicken tikka...and...uh...”; “these foods”

P3 “the food...uh...you wait...uh...five minutes”; “those...uh...those we don’t have”

Strategy 2: Use of non-linguistic means

P1 Hand gestures: showing three fingers as for the number of dishes; Shrugging shoulders

P2 Nodding head as an act of confirmation; miming

P3 Facial expressions: raising eyebrows while shaking head as to say no; miming

Strategy 3: Code switching

P1 Asking for “deep fried” in Bengali from a colleague in the middle of explaining a dish in the menu to a customer

P2 None: he served a few customers and did not face something very difficult to ask from anyone

P3 Asking for “medium-rare and medium-well” in Bengali

Strategy 4: Appealing for help or asking for meaning

P1 None: he did not face any serious breakdown to need to code switch for

P2 “Can you say again?” asking a customer he was serving

P3 “How you write it?” asking the customer he was taking the order from to spell some words for him

Table 4.9: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

OBS 6	P1	P2	P3	Total
Str 1	45	43	48	141
Str 2	37	32	38	107
Str 3	13		1	14
Str 4	0	9	15	24

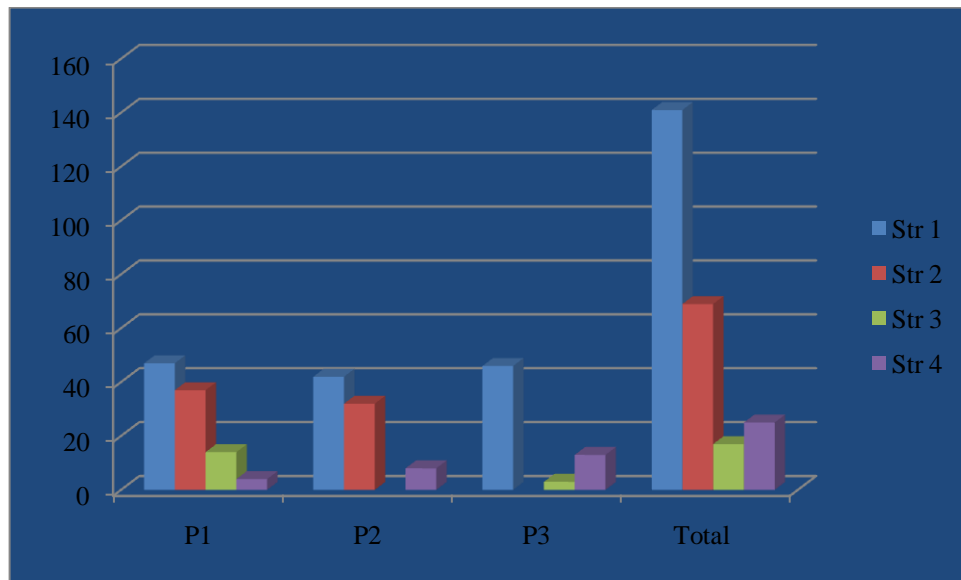


Figure 4.6: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

The results of the sixth observation session show that strategy 1 was still the most used one by the participants while communicating in English with the customers on the job. The participants were using body language more purposefully and sophisticatedly while talking

to customers to clearer make meaning. Body language was the second frequently used strategy by the participants. P1 did not ask for meaning that much, instead he drew on taking help from his colleagues or his supervisor. The results highlight that asking for meaning or help from colleagues as a communication strategy was more frequently used than codeswitching. Generally, the participants were using the communication strategies more effective with the only exception of P1, here, who showed some fluctuations in applying the communication strategy.

4.3.7. The Seventh Observation Session

The seventh observation session was carried out on 15/6/2010. The results obtained from the seventh observation indicate that subjects' were asking more frequently for meaning from the customers and colleagues and at the same time were cutting down on long pauses while still using the hedges.

Strategy 1: Use of hedges (time gaining strategies) and all-purposed words (over-generalizations)

P1 "What about...uh...drink?"

P2 "actually...this one...uh... not sure"

P3 "Soup...uh...salad...and...mm...that one also..."

Strategy 2: Use of non-linguistic means

P1 Miming: using the forefinger and the thumb to mime a small thing

P2 Shrugging shoulders to simply signify that he did not know while the customer was asking P2 to help her with choosing among two dishes

P3 None: he did not attend to many customers and the orders he was taking from the customers were very short and not that much demanding

Strategy 3: Code switching

- P1** Asking the supervisor in Bengali for “my treat” after two customers he served left
- P2** None: he did not code switch as he showed more confident while talking in English
- P3** Asking P2 if he knew what “let’s go Dutch” meant; but P2 did not know as well. So they asked a senior colleague for meaning of this expression

Strategy 4: Appealing for help or asking for meaning

- P1** “Can you write for me?” asking from a senior colleague for help
- P2** “How you say it in English?” asking a customer
- P3** “Hot? How?” asking a customer who was describing her preference

Table 4.10: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

OBS 7	P1	P2	P3	Total
Str 1	47	42	46	141
Str 2	37	32		69
Str 3	14		3	17
Str 4	4	8	13	25

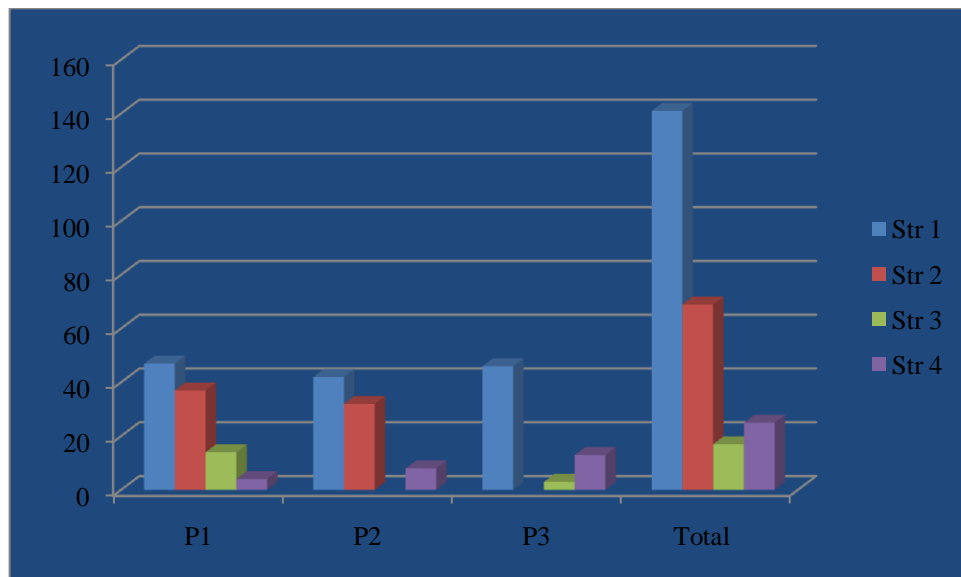


Figure 4.7: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

Results of the seventh observation highlight some obvious changes in the participants' application of communication strategies compared with the early sessions. Although the participants were still using strategy 1 in their communication events, they use less of strategy 3 and instead drew more on strategy 4. P2 did not switch to Bengali and therefore did not use strategy 3. P3 did not take many orders and they were not that demanding as well. P3 did not use strategy 2 in this session. P2 and P3 used strategy 4 more than P1. P1 seemed to be tired and this could have affected his performance.

4.3.8. The Eighth Observation Session

The eighth observation session was conducted on 29/6/2010. The results obtained from the eighth observation show that subjects could communicate with customers at their workplace by applying the communication strategies. However, there was a shift in the way they used the communication strategies to help facilitate the communication events in order to reach the communicative goals.

Strategy 1: Use of hedges (time gaining strategies) and all-purposed words (over-generalizations)

P1 "That one...uh...what the ...uh...number?"; "we have this food"

P2 "The...menu...uh...ok...this one also"; "That you want?"

P3 "Oh! You ask for...mm...meatballs...oh.. sorry sorry"; "This one or that one?"

Strategy 2: Use of non-linguistic means

P1 Gestures: connecting thumb and forefinger to cue the customer that his order is "perfect"

- P2** None: he was almost managing in English without drawing on body language. However, he did not attend many customers and as a result did not have many orders to take
- P3** Facial expressions: eye contact with a customer while taking an order from her

Strategy 3: Code switching

- P1** Few words in Bengali: asking the supervisor for “self service”
- P2** None: he managed all his conversations in English despite the problems he faced
- P3** None: he was talking in English almost all of the time and also did not take too many orders

Strategy 4: Appealing for help or asking for meaning

- P1** “Sorry. I don’t know it. It is how?” asking a customer
- P2** “Yea yea...but how? Together?”asking a customer
- P3** “Not sure...what food?”asking a customer in response to her question about a dish in the menu

Table 4.11: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

OBS 8	P1	P2	P3	Total
Str 1	46	42	46	134
Str 2	23		28	51
Str 3	10			10
Str 4	8	5	7	20

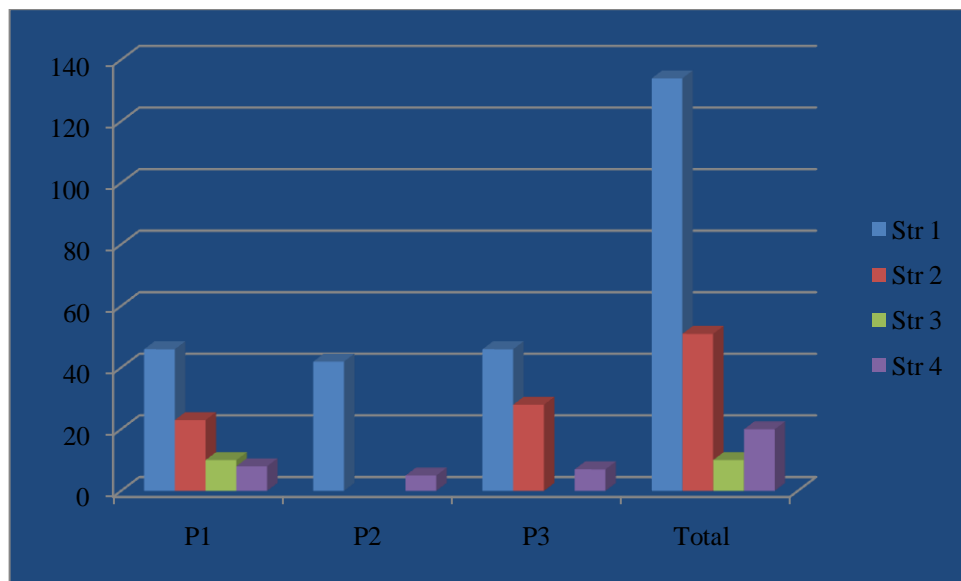


Figure 4.8: The most frequent communication strategies used by the participants

Results of the eighth observation session highlight that the participants were still using strategy 1 more frequently than the other strategies. Strategy 2 was the second most frequent one in P1 and P3's performances. However, P2 did not code switch and did not use body language as a strategy. Actually his use of strategy 2 was next to nothing. Notwithstanding, P2 took some orders that were not that much demanding except for few times that he asked the customers for meaning, he could manage the communication events mostly in English. Among the participants, P3 did not code switch as well.

Throughout the eight sessions of observation, the participants were observed to be improving not only in English but also in their use of the communication strategies. Despite some fluctuations in their application of the communication strategies, participants were steadily cutting down on the communication strategies due to their improvement in English which allowed them to communicate much better compared to the earlier stages of observation. A comparison of the results shows that towards the ending of the observations the participants were switching into Bengali less than the earlier sessions. However, they were getting used to use strategy 4 much better compared with the early sessions. They

were asking for the meaning of the words from the customers or colleagues. Participants were even asking for the correct pronunciations and spelling from the customers and the senior colleagues.

The participants' performance showed that they were not hesitating to draw on communication strategies to gap the breakdowns in the communication events that happened in the course of the observation period. They frequently used the above mentioned strategies to bridge the breakdowns or the gaps in their communication events. They do use some other strategies a very few number of times (e.g., abandoning the message) but their number was almost next to zero and they bore no influence on the performance of the participants in their communications.

Therefore, only the most frequent communication strategies were included in the description of the observations. Moreover, some of the communication strategies can be grouped according to the types discussed in the literature review.

According to the data, during the course of the observations the participants were inclined to use more English words as the observation sessions progressed. They also showed that the participants were progressing at an irregular pace with the only exception of P2 who was steadily improving. This could be related to his better basic knowledge of English language. According to the obtained data, it is possible to say that subjects were gradually drawing on some specific communication strategies. That is, they were getting used to some set of strategies and were using them more frequently and more efficiently in their communication.

P1 did not use much English during the first four sessions of observation and he used gestures and code switching more often to achieve the communicative goals. This shows that his English knowledge was very limited but still he was trying to communicate through alternative methods.

As the observation sessions continued, all the participants were noticeably more and more willing to use English and their ability to use English increased gradually. P2 was improving considerably better than the other two subjects who had a slower progress in picking up English through time until it was very clear that P2 could do most of his job communicating through English and alternative communicating strategies were observed only a limited number of times (e.g., strategies 2, 3, 4).

P2 could use English more frequently than P1 and P3 from the very start, due to the fact that P2 had had a longer exposure to the English language and therefore had a wider range of vocabulary and was more confident to speak English. His language improved faster and the improvement was very clear through the observation sessions as the number of times he used English in the later sessions were more than his use of English in the early sessions. This relatively fast improvement was due to the frequent use of the “asking for the meaning” strategy which more exposed P2 to language use on the job.

Throughout the observation sessions, participants 1 and 3 could communicate most of the time in simple English language although with many mistakes. Yet, they were still using alternative communication methods such as gestures and asking for more meaning, or appealing for help, which were most of the time complementary and supportive to their language use.

During the last two observation sessions, P2 showed a very good ability to understand and use English. It was very rare to see him using other alternative methods such as gestures or code switching while asking for more meaning continued. P1 and P3 demonstrated an improvement in using more English. However, their performance showed a very limited ability to communicate in English language during the first four observations.

Throughout the later observation sessions, P3 showed some improvement and he was observed to produce some simple English sentences albeit marked with mistakes. The use of gestures and code switching had decreased through the course of the observations in the performances of all the subjects. They showed more confidence to ask for the meaning rather than switching into Bengali.

4.4 Interview Form 2

The second interview was conducted soon after the observation sessions were over on 6/7/2010. The second interview form (See Appendix 3) included some questions addressing the participants' view of their English proficiency four months after their first interview. These questions were devised to firstly obtain the participants' conception of their different ways of improving their English on the job. Secondly, the questions in the Interview Form Two were asked from the participants to trigger responses concerning topics that needed explanations and descriptions in English. This was sort of demanding and the participants were expected to answer the questions in more words.

Thus, the responses to the questions were used as speaking samples of the participants' to be analyzed here. The purpose of this section is to analyze the data obtained from the second interview form, which is produced as Appendix 3. Based on the iBT TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics (See Appendix 4), all the subjects showed some

improvement in their English proficiency. Most probably, this could be a direct result of their four-month exposure (immersion) to English in their workplace.

The second interview analysis and consequently the grades allocated to the subjects provided some evidence for this. The grades P1 and P3 obtained from the first interview session were both (1) while the second interview evaluation marked their performance as (2). However, P2 who obtained (2) for the first interview session showed a better progress and obtained a grade (3) in the second interview.

Here, for the second time the same procedure was followed exactly to bear an account of the subjects' ability to communicate orally in English. However small in scale, this grading serves more specifically as a qualifying measure to understand the progress participants had made over the course of four months of observation. The results signal a progress, however small and slow, in the participants' speaking ability that seems consistent with the gradual exposure of the subjects to English in their workplace.

However, the interpreter was present during the second interview session to help provide more explanation on the topics in the questions. The following evaluates and gives full description of each subject's English speaking skill based on his performance in the second interview:

Table 4.12: Analysis of information from the interview form two

Main themes asked in the second interview	P1	P2	P3
Methods used to achieve improvement in English language proficiency	Writing new words on slips of paper or on hands to memorize (e.g., dish; main meal; mushroom, etc.)	Asking senior colleagues help with pronunciation, new words and practicing them; observing senior colleagues when serving customers	Talking more to foreign customers (native speakers of English) and friends
Problems faced when communicating in English	Understanding little or next to nothing at the beginning; problem talking to customers and even to the boss; some colleagues and customers making fun of	Understanding all what customers asking for as well as most of boss's orders	Taking orders and especially if the customer is demanding too much
Strategies used to overcome the problems	Ignoring or taking easy the people making fun of him; concentrating more on the job and trying to learn more new words	Reading an English book with only problem of having little time; asking friends for meaning was much easier	Asking for help from another colleague; observing what colleagues say and do and trying to learn it
Reality of the expectations about communication at workplace in the beginning	Thought English is not important at all and could do his job without the need to communicate too much in English	Afraid not to be able to make it through, day by day improved, however	Knew that communication would be a hard time but no other choice, had to work to survive
Probable preparations if there was a prior knowledge of reality of communication	Would have taken some English courses prior to coming to Malaysia	Maybe learning some working English before coming to Malaysia	Could take some English courses or self-teach before coming to Malaysia

4.4.1. Participant 1

According to the iBT TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics, the results of the second interview for P1 is estimated to be (2) on the grading scale. Therefore, his performance is generally described as follows:

P1's responses at this level addressed the task but did not develop it substantially. However limited and impaired by problems with delivery of speech and general clarity, his speech was mostly intelligible. P1's speech was unclear at times but still he could be understood. However, he had to be attended with more effort due to his unclear articulation and wrong intonation. His speech was choppy and hardly rhythmic; this could obscure the meaning at times.

Extract P1i: Intelligible speech despite problems with overall clarity

i) "I write...words...uh...and I...mm...learn... I ...mm...I write words on paper... I.am..sometimes I write words... on my hands... I learn words..."

P1's speech showed instances of incorrect stresses of words which proved he still has a long way to go before he can be categorized as a proficient English speaker.

Extract P1j: Incorrect stress

i) Coll`eague instead of `Colleague

In terms of language use, P1's responses demonstrated a limited mastery of English language rules and a small reservoir of vocabulary. These, however, would lead to limits on giving full expressions to his ideas. He was saying things in awkward sentences that he had he had seemingly picked up much easier. P1's command of grammar was basic and he was not able to correctly connect the propositions he was making. When he was fluid, he was using some mastered structures and vocabulary since they were repeating themselves throughout.

Extract P1k: Limited mastery over English vocabulary and grammar

i) "I first...uh... not know English...uh...is not important..."

ii) "I think first...I...mm...also no need many English...and...uh... I can do work..."

iii) “easy...also...uh...sometimes...uh...sometimes...uh I...uh...also do everything easy...and...uh...I first think...”

P1’s transcripts show him pausing in his speech time and again. This could be related to low level of proficiency in the English language which did not let him maintain a fluid flow of speech most of the time. However, hedges were used by P1 as a strategy to gain more time while thinking of what to say next or how to say it.

Extract P1l: Use of Hedges

i) “mm...work...uh...easy...and...uh...I easy...uh...find job”

P1’s performance showed that his responses were connected to the demanded task, but they were not enough to develop the topic properly. He was not elaborating on the topic/s and sentences he was producing were not supporting the topic in details. Although generally intelligible, his connection of ideas was partly vague.

Extract P1m: Limited content knowledge

i) “I...uh...first understand...uh...small English. Also...and...uh...I...uh...only...take orders...also...uh...I...cannot talk English...uh...good English... also boss...cannot know I sick...”

P1’s speech show that he was repeating some words with hedges in between. This could also gain him some more time to hold the flow of the words in spite of the pauses in between.

Extract P1n: Repetitions

i) “uh...some customer...uh...some customer and ...uh colleagues...laugh...uh...laugh when I am speak...”

The interpreter was not so much involved in explaining the questions more as he was in the first interview (e.g., he passed a look at the interpreter to cue him help with the word “wage”).

4.4.2. Participant 2

P2 showed a lot of improvement in his English language fluency over the 4 months. According to the iBT TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubric communication strategy, the results of the second interview for P2 is estimated to be (3) on the grading scale.

A general description of his speech shows his responses appropriate at addressing the demanded task. However, his responses were not fully developed. P2 was generally intelligible and his speech was coherent. He could also give voice to his ideas with certain lapses in expressing them. At times, he showed some fluidity, but it was marred by obvious lapses in expressing ideas.

Extract P2i: Coherence speech

i) “I learned ...uh...new words...mm, and I...asked colleagues...sometimes...I ...uh..I sometimes asked customers new words...”

In terms of speech delivery, he showed clarity and instances of fluidity of expression. Still, some problems with pronunciation and irregular pacing were observable in P2’s speech. These were putting more on the listener to get his speech at some points.

Extract P2j: Incorrect stress

i) `understand instead of under`stand

ii) `improve instead of im`prove

Overall, he could convey himself over. In terms of language use, P2 was somehow automatically using his grammar knowledge in making well-formed sentences. His rather

improved vocabulary made it possible for him to coherently express his ideas. Moreover, P2's responses demonstrated that however his vocabulary was not that extent and his mastery over grammar rules was not all satisfactory, the message was successfully carried over, although the fluidity of speech at times damaged.

Extract P2k: Improved but limited vocabulary

i) "First I was...afraid...and I ..uh...first think...uh...I can't make...mm...my English better...but now...uh...I improved...also I...uh...speak better English"

However speaking more fluid than the first interview, P1 had a considerable number of pauses in his speech. He was using hedges to fill in the gaps and continue his speech.

Extract P2l: Use of Hedges

i) "Uh...I tried ...uh... to learn...by...mm...by a book...so I teach myself"

P2's ability of developing the topics was most clear in the responses. At most, his responses were sustained and clear and could carry his ideas. However, the overall development of the topic was somehow limited because they were not so detailed and were not specifically elaborated. Nevertheless, P2's responses showed that he was not always good at relating the ideas in his mind to each other while he was expressing them.

Extract P2m: Limited content knowledge

i) "...maybe...uh...I could...uh...study English...uh...before...and...uh...go to English classes...uh...and learn better English....and...uh...also and learn more words..."

The interpreter was providing explanations on the questions only two times in the second interview.

4.4.3. Participant 3

P3 was showing slow progress in his English speaking skill. According to the iBT TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics, the results of the second interview for P3 is estimated to be (2) on the grading scale. A general description of P3's responses to the demanded tasks, show that he was able to address the tasks with limited development of the topics. P3's speech comprised some intelligible responses; however, he could not deliver his speech with overall clarity and problems in delivery of his speech could make him obscure and unclear at times. Moreover, a more detailed description of P3's performance is as follows: in terms of delivery of speech, he was basically intelligible. Moreover, his pace of speaking was not rhythmic.

Extract P3h: Intelligible speech despite problems with overall clarity

i) "I...uh...tried talk English with customers...uh...and...uh...also...foreign...foreign people...uh...and...uh...I try...mm...also...I make friend foreign people ...uh...and I talk...uh...and...I better English..."

However, P3's wrong pronunciation and awkward intonation required more attention. Sometimes, choppy pronunciation was making the meaning obscure.

Extract P3i: Incorrect stress

Foreign`er instead of `Foreigner

`Conversation instead of Conver`sation

P3's overall use of language showed limitation. He did not have a sophisticated command over the language rules and his use of words showed his reservoir of vocabulary limited and small. These were preventing him from expressing his ideas clearly. His performance showed that he was fluid when saying some expressions:

Extract P3j: Limited vocabulary

“I go and ...uh... I call other waiter...and...he helps...and I...uh...listen always to they speak...”

Nevertheless, his mastery of some basic grammar rules and expressions was clear. The propositions he was trying to make were simple and basic due to his limited knowledge of the language; this was also marked by inability to make proper connections between his propositions. In the same way, he used to say things in threads with an awkward use of conjunctions and juxtapositions.

Extract P3k: Mastery over simple grammar rules and simple expressions

i) “I take orders...uh...also...and...uh...I ask from customer...I write...uh...and I bring food to customer...I show menu...uh...and...ask..mm...my friend help...always...I...uh...take order”

In terms of topic development, P3’s responses proved to be basically related to the demanded tasks. He was aiming at the topics but he was not able to develop them properly. This, however, resulted from the expression of basic ideas with limited elaboration. The supportive sentences to the development of the topics were not that much elaborated. P3’s expression of relevant substance and ideas was sometimes repetitious and seemed vague at times because of limited mastery of English.

Extract P3l: Limited content knowledge

i) “I know first...my job is hard...uh...because my English...I afraid cannot do...uh...no good...but...uh...also...uh...I afraid...mm...I cannot do...”

P3's speech shows that P3 still had the hedges in his speech despite his better fluency than the first interview. Nevertheless, hedges helped him gain more time to find better ways of saying things.

Extract P3m: Use of Hedges

“Foreign people...uh...I have friend...uh...and...uh...he...live in KL...uh”

The interpreter was explaining things for P3 at some instances. (e.g., he passed looks at the interpreter to help him for the word “conversation”, also he asked the interpreter in Bengali to get a better understanding of what to say in response to the third question).

All in all, participants found ways or Methods on their own to achieve improvement in their English language proficiency. As seen above, the waiters faced certain problems when communicating in English. For example, it was difficult for P1 to understand all what customers telling him. Practically the participants applied communication strategies to overcome the problems when talking in English in the restaurant (e.g., asking colleagues while taking orders; using body language to convey their meaning, etc.) Reality of their expectations about communication at workplace in the beginning was different from what they had been expecting from the beginning. However, the participants could have probable preparations if they had the knowledge of reality of communication prior to their arrival in Malaysia. This is the proof that the waiters had realized the importance of knowing English to find a job and retain it in a setting where English is the medium of communication.

4.5 Summary

As stated above, each of the subjects were interviewed twice and were observed eight times over four months. The aim of the first and second interviews which were, respectively, conducted before and after the observation sessions was to find out the level of subjects'

proficiency in English. For the purpose of analysis, the iBT TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubrics was used, because it is academically renowned and provides a constructive way of analyzing the components in oral English proficiency.

All the participants were monitored and observed in one-hour-long sessions to look for their use of English language and any probable use of communication strategies on the job floor. Moreover, each session was categorized into divisions of six ten minutes to help better record the different communication strategies used by subjects. Some sets of communication strategies marked their presence frequently in the subjects' performances. Therefore, this chapter specifically provided an analysis of the use of these strategies over the observation sessions.

However, a description of the subjects' performances shows a rising tendency on the part of the subjects to communicate more in English and a decreasing use of alternative ways, communication strategies here. Generally the analysis of the data showed that there is better progress in P2 in English proficiency and a slower improvement in both P1 and P3.