ORAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF PRE-UNIVERSITY MALAYSIAN CHINESE STUDENTS

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FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
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FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS

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ABSTRACT

Communication in a language other than a person's mother tongue is difficult (Khan & Victori i Blaya, 2011; Kongsom, 2009; Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011; Teng, 2012). Communication strategies play an important role in language acquisition as it could offer non-native speakers the ability to deliver effective communication while speaking in English (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). The purpose of this study was to identify the most frequently used Oral Communication Strategies (henceforth OCSs) by pre-university Malaysian Chinese students and the relationship between oral English language proficiency (henceforth OP) and OCSs. Once the OCSs were identified, the possible reasons for using them by students with different OP were investigated. This study used a descriptive research method where it started with a quantitative approach (questionnaire survey) and followed by a qualitative approach (structured interview). The questionnaire of OCSI (Oral Communication Strategy Inventory) developed by Nakatani (2006) was adapted to collect data from 60 pre-university Malaysian Chinese students at a matriculation college, among whom 15% (n=9) were interviewed. MUET (Malaysian University English Test) was used to classify students into different proficiency levels, such as proficient level (Band 5), satisfactory level (Band 4) and modest level (Band 3) in the study. The results found that the participants are highly aware of the usage of OCSs in speaking and they can be regarded as high strategy users. Moreover, a significant and sizeable association between OP and students' usage of OCSs was found by using Spearman correlation coefficients. Finally, students' possible reasons for using certain existing OCSs were identified through structured interview. The suggestions for future research were put forward.

ABSTRAK

Komunikasi dalam bahasa yang bukan bahasa ibunda adalah sukar untuk seseorang (Khan & Victori i Blaya, 2011; Kongsom, 2009; Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011; Teng, 2012). Strategi Komunikasi memainkan peranan yang penting dalam penguasaan bahasa kerana ia boleh menawarkan keupayaan kepada penutur bukan asli untuk menyampaikan komunikasi yang berkesan semasa bertutur dalam Bahasa Inggeris (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti Strategi Komunikasi Oral yang paling kerap digunakan (iaitu OCSs) oleh para pelajar pra-universiti Cina di Malaysia, dan hubungan di antara penguasaan bahasa Inggeris lisan (iaitu OP) dan OCSs. Setelah OCSs dikenal pasti, sebab-sebab kemungkinan penggunaannya oleh para pelajar yang mempunyai OP yang berbeza telah disiasat. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah penyelidikan deskriptif di mana ia bermula dengan pendekatan kuantitatif (soal selidik) dan diikuti oleh pendekatan kualitatif (temu bual berstruktur). Soal selidik dari OCSI (Oral Communication Strategi Inventori) yang dihasilkan oleh Nakatani (2006) telah diadaptasikan untuk mengumpul data daripada 60 orang pelajar-pelajar pra-universiti Cina di Kolej Matrikulasi Selangor (KMS), Malaysia, di mana 15% daripada mereka telah ditemu ramah. MUET (Malaysian University English Test) telah digunakan untuk mengelaskan pelajar-pelajar mengikut tahap kemahiran yang berbeza, seperti tahap mahir (Band 5), tahap memuaskan (Band 4) dan tahap sederhana (Band 3) dalam kajian ini. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa para peserta mempunyai kesedaran yang tinggi dalam penggunaan OCSs dari segi pertuturan, dan mereka boleh dianggap sebagai pengguna strategi yang tinggi. Selain itu, hubungan yang ketara dan besar di antara OP dan penggunaan OCSs oleh para pelajar telah didapati dengan menggunakan Spearman pekali korelasi. Akhir sekali, sebab-sebab kemungkinan pelajar menggunakan OCSs tertentu yang sedia ada telah dikenal pasti melalui temu bual berstruktur. Cadangan-cadangan kajian lanjutan telah dikemukakan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL   English as a second language learner

MUET   Malaysian University English Test

OCSs   Oral Communication Strategies

OCSI   Oral Communication Strategy Inventory

OP   Oral English Language Proficiency

SLA   Second Language Acquisition

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Communication strategies represent a significant part in language acquisition since it offers second language speakers the ability to communicate effectively while speaking in English (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; R. L. Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). This study is designed to investigate the most frequently used Oral Communication Strategies (henceforth, OCSs) by pre-university Malaysian Chinese students and the relationship between oral English language proficiency (henceforth, OP) and OCSs. Once the OCSs have been identified, the possible reasons for use by students with different OP will be examined. The researcher surveyed and interviewed the Malaysian Chinese students from a matriculation college in Selangor on their strategies to handle speaking difficulties and the possible reasons aimed at using certain OCSs in speaking. Previous studies found that students with different OP employed different OCSs (Nakatani, 2006; Zhou, 2014). However, they have not identified the possible reason(s) for using certain OCSs by students with different OP levels. Thus, the author sets out to investigate whether there is any significant relationship between students' OP and their OCSs; thus, identify the possible reasons they used to enhance their oral English communication.

This chapter presents (a) background of the study, (b) statement of the problem, (c) purpose of the study, (d) research questions, (e) significance of the study, (f) limitations of the study.

1.2 Background of the study

1.2.1 The role of English as a second language in Malaysia

In Malaysia, English was first used as an official language and then as a second language (Mahreez & Ghani, 1994). It is known that the Chinese dialects and Tamil are not foreign languages but are considered as extra languages for many Malaysians. Nevertheless, English is accepted as a second language, being of secondary importance in the ranking of languages of Malaysia (Mahreez & Ghani, 1994; Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014).

Malaysia was under the British governance from the late eighteenth until the mid-twentieth centuries. Under the influence of the British Empire, the English language had been used in various fields such as commerce, transport and mass media from the colonial days (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014) .

However, when the Malaya Federation became an independent nation in the year 1957, Bahasa Malaysia became the national language; the English language in Malaya was not renounced (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014). Conversely, it has earned its standing in Malaysia.

1.2.2 English Language as a medium of instruction in Pre-University

English is the lingua franca for fields of business, education, employment, science and technology, and many other professional fields. The importance of English is noticeable in Malaysia. A majority of corporations mentioned that prospective job seekers with proficient command of English would perform better in career. The Ministry of Education

has made English a compulsory subject for primary and secondary school students; Similarly, English has been a compulsory subject in universities and private institutions. For instance, English Language in the Matriculation one- year program is important to every pre-university student for two reasons. Firstly, a good command of English is very useful for pre-university students in entering national and international universities. Secondly, most of the critical (physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics, accounting, business management and economics) and non-critical (English, moral) courses are conducted in the English Language worldwide due to the significance of English acquisition skills in pre-universities. Furthermore, it can help to reduce the burden of students in their learning process as well as to make students better adjusted to new study environment (ADIMIN, 2014). Hence, the syllabus specification for the English Language in the Matriculation Programme is to help students become effective and efficient language users in academic and social contexts. This is to bridge a gap between the necessary language skills of secondary and tertiary education. Taking the above into consideration, the focus of pre-university in the first semester at the matriculation college is on developing general language proficiency and preparing the students for the 'Malaysian University English Test' (henceforth MUET). In the second semester, the focus shifts towards learning English for academic purposes in order to prepare students for the necessary language skills at tertiary level (ADIMIN, 2014).

Pre-university is a program to prepare the students in pursuing tertiary education in the field of Science, Technical Science and Accounting. Learners will be able to speak confidently and fluently to express ideas on a variety of topics by using appropriate language in both formal and informal contexts (ADIMIN, 2014)

1.2.3 English proficiency test in Pre-University

With the increasing use of English Language in academic contexts, having a sufficient command of English has become imperative in the age of science and technology (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). Realizing its importance, universities are taking actions to help students enhance their English Language proficiency, such as offering a series of compulsory or elective English Language subjects upon graduation. Entry requirements normally include the learners' score on proficiency tests, e.g. IELTS, TOEFL (Elder & O'Loughlin, 2003).

In Malaysia, English has been widely used as the medium of instruction at the higher education levels (Gill, Tollefson, & Tsui, 2004). Therefore, it is essential to examine the students' English Language proficiency level prior to their entrance to a university or college. Currently, MUET has been extensively used as a benchmark in verifying students' oral proficiency for the purpose of entering Malaysian public universities. The test is scheduled and administrated by the Malaysian Examination Council and held in Malaysia, which is a localized version of an English test that functions similar to IELTS and TOEFL (Rethinasamy & Chuah, 2011). According to the Malaysian Examination Council (1999), the syllabus of MUET is aimed at reinforcing and strengthening English language ability among pre-university students to enable students perform effectively and efficiently in their academic pursuits in higher education. In the Malaysian budget for 2015, the Education Ministry proposed that the MUET is important to all pre-university students who intend to further their studies at local tertiary level. Students who intend to take critical courses such as medicine, law, or engineering need to score higher band in the MUET. Failing that, their application may not be considered. The MUET score can be used as an entrance or an exit point depending on the requirement of the universities or

courses applied. Students who fail to obtain the minimum requirement of the MUET score or band may also be accepted in the university but have to obtain a higher band upon graduation (Yat, 2014).

1.2.4 The importance of spoken English for Pre-University students

As the primary usage of language is to communicate, learning a language without making use of it develops a detachment between the learner and the language and this can be a huge hurdle for developing overall proficiency (Hazlia Azila, 2012). Many nations in which English is spoken as a second or foreign language acknowledge the importance of learning English, especially for educational and employment purposes. A lack of competence in English can be a disadvantage when applying for a university or looking for a job (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Spoken English is indeed very significant for pre-university students because it can help students to communicate with other people, to convey messages efficiently and to be a foundation for their future career. As English is an international language and has been widely spoken by people all over the world, it is necessary for students to master good English speaking skills so that they can communicate with teachers as well as other students. Later on, when they enter the university, they will most probably be involved with a student exchange program and they will be sent on an overseas assignment for further development. With sufficient command in spoken English, they will easily be able to communicate with the foreigners. Besides, spoken English is important because it can help students to convey messages and information efficiently. Most of the subjects in pre-university and university are in English, e.g. science subjects and mathematics. For every subject, students are required to conduct presentations and engage in group activities.

Hence, spoken English is important for them in order to present ideas and information efficiently. Moreover, the MUET speaking component serves as a platform for pre-university students to learn and practice proper communication skills, which once mastered, would set a good foundation and benefit their future career path. Spoken English is of importance because the graduates will be dealing with interviews for either jobs or university entry and most of the interviews are conducted in English. In other words, the usage and practice of spoken English during the one year in pre-university can build a good foundation and further boost the opportunity for young adults to obtain decent jobs in the society (Yat, 2014).

In a nutshell, students speak more than they read or write. This is important as they ought to master the spoken language proficiency in order to enable them to convey messages effectively and confidently. Equipping themselves with good spoken language, students will be able to participate in group discussion, elaborate on their opinions and ideas well and coherently. It is also a platform for them in the working environment in the future where spoken English may be the mode of communication (Yat, 2014).

Thus, pre-university candidates are evaluated on their competence to make individual presentations and to participate in group discussions on an extensive range of current issues, namely on topics such as economy, education, and science and technology to enhance their spoken English Language proficiency.

1.2.5 Communication Strategies for oral English

Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs) play an important role in language acquisition as it could offer ESL/ EFL speakers the ability to deliver effective communications, as

Willems (1987) contends that the introduction of communication strategies could motivate and drive slower learners towards efficient English speaking.

Many English language teachers also observed the difference in the reflection of English learners toward speaking English, some viewing it as enjoyable but others as, challenging. In fact, due to the different ways learners acquire the skills of speaking English, their overall language achievements also vary (Hismanoglu, 2000; R. L. Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). It is essential to understand how learners learn English speaking in order to enhance their oral communication proficiency. The learning strategy adopted by learners to improve their speaking is one of the fundamental pillars of productive skills that is of high importance in ESL/ EFL learning (Burns, 1998).

Over the past three decades, several researchers have emphasized the necessity to focus on communicative language learning rather than on structured-based unified syllabus in second/ foreign language learning (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013; Richards & Rogers, 1991). Past research has shown that to enhance learner's proficiency in communication, one can develop the skill set necessary to employ strategies that will compensate for their weakness in that area (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Nakatani, 2005). Furthermore, students with different oral English language proficiency levels employ different types of strategies (Chen, 2009; Hismanoglu, 2000).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Communication in a language other than a person's mother tongue is difficult (Khan & Victori i Blaya, 2011; Kongsom, 2009; Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011; Teng, 2012). In the Malaysian Chinese community, most of the young Chinese are from the third generation

onwards. Despite being Malaysians, they hold on to their culture and tradition, such as speaking in their native language, Mandarin and dialects such as Cantonese, Hokkien, Hainanese and Hakka. These are the primary languages spoken in most Chinese homes in Malaysia (Yahaya, Yahaya, Lean, Bon, & Ismail, 2011). Thus, these children seldom communicate in English at home.

Usually, Malaysian Chinese students start to learn English since early childhood. However, in schools and tuition centers, English is generally taught in sections such as grammar, vocabulary and writing (Yahaya et al., 2011). While these teaching methods could improve exam scores, like Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) and Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM), students remain less proficient and efficient at using English for oral communication (Ting & Phan, 2008). Very few students learn English in a totally English speaking environment (Yahaya et al., 2011). In addition, Hassan et al. (2009) stated that UiTM Sarawak students frequently made lexical and grammatical errors in oral English communication. It was reported that they always feel hesitant and undecided when speaking in English (Mustapha, Ismail, Singh, & Elias, 2010). Furthermore, University Malaya former vice-chancellor Datuk Rafiah Salim claimed that quite a few law scholars did not have a solid grasp of English, thus struggle in Malaysian courts (Yahaya et al., 2011). Hence, there is a necessity to enhance Malaysian students' oral English language proficiency.

As a child spends the majority of his day at school, the language used in school would naturally influence the aptitude in acquiring English as a second language (McLaughlin, 2013). Interaction at school with schoolmates as well as teachers are also crucial in determining the oral proficiency of children in English. A statistics by Yahaya et al. (2011) showed that ninety percent of Malaysian Chinese choose to send their children to Chinese

Primary schools. As the majority of students at Chinese vernacular schools are Chinese, these students have little opportunity to use English to communicate with others since Mandarin remains the primary language used in the school.

Furthermore, Malaysia has diverse ethnic groups who use their own languages, which could be dialects and informal or colloquial forms of English. This also influences the way Malaysians use English. Alim (2011) comments on this phenomenon as Malaysian English, also known as "Manglish", which refers to unique characteristics of English in Malaysia that are heavily influenced by other languages such as Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese and Tamil. As English is an international language, it is a form of communication with foreigners. However, the tendency of Malaysians to use Manglish instead of Standard English could potentially cause confusion to those who only know Standard English.

Finally, from the previous literature reviewed, several researches showed that students with different English language proficiency levels employ different types of strategies during communication (Chen, 2009; Hismanoglu, 2000; L. Q. HUA, 2010; Nakatani, 2006), but these researchers have not identified the possible reason(s) for using certain OCSs by students with different proficiency levels. Moreover, there are insufficient studies related to OCSs in Malaysian context among Malaysian Chinese ESL learners. Thus, it is not only significant to identify the communication strategies adopted by Malaysian Chinese ESL learners, but it is also important to identify the possible reasons they use certain OCSs to enhance their oral English communication.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is threefold. First, it is to identify the frequently used OCSs by Malaysian Chinese students. The second is to determine the relationship between OP and OCSs. The independent variable is the Oral Proficiency, while the dependent variable is the Oral Communication Strategies. The third is to identify the possible reasons for using certain OCSs in speaking English, such as showing respect to audiences; helping people to understand better; building confidence and allowing them students to express themselves freely, which would aim to help students understand their own OCSs so that they will have more consideration in choosing appropriate OCSs to enhance their OP.

1.5 Research Questions

Compatible with the stated research objectives, this study sets the following as its research questions:

RQ1: What are the OCSs used by Malaysian Chinese students when communicating in English?

RQ2: To what extent does OCSs correlate with OP of Malaysian Chinese students?

RQ3: What are the possible reasons for using OCSs in speaking English?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The main aim of this research is to identify the most frequently used OCSs by Malaysian Chinese students and the possible reasons for using certain OCSs. Through this study, students will be able to raise awareness towards the different kinds of OCSs and realize their preference of certain OCSs as well as possible reasons. In addition, teachers will be

more informed of the OCSs used by students with different OP levels and therewith, they are able to improve their teaching methods and provide effective teaching approaches to help to enhance students' OP. Last but not least, it is anticipated that the results of this study will benefit curriculum designers in developing appropriate speaking courses and organizing speaking activities to better meet the needs of students.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The findings of this research might not be generalized to all pre-university Malaysian Chinese students as the sample size is small. Only nine participants were selected to be interviewed subject to their availability and readiness to cooperate. In addition, this study only examined one variable which is OP. Other variables such as task types (real scene classroom setting), regularity of exchanging discourses in English outside the classroom and motivation to speak in English should also be taken into consideration in future studies.

1.8 Conclusion

The study attempts to identify the most frequently used OCSs by pre-university Malaysian Chinese students and to examine the relationship between OP and OCSs as well as the possible reasons for using certain OCSs by students with different OP levels. This chapter presents the background and significance of the study, its purpose and problems statement, research questions, as well as limitations to the research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the study's theoretical framework and reviews previous studies related to communication strategies. Firstly, the chapter elaborates on meanings and categorizations of communication strategies. Secondly, it focuses on the key variable which is language proficiency that related to the use of communication strategies. Thirdly, previous literature on students' use of communication strategies are reviewed.

2.2 Definition of Communication Strategies

Though many researchers have put forward the definition concerning communication strategies (henceforth, CS) of ESL learners, few have come to an agreement on an integrated and holistic definition (Mei & Nathalang, 2010; Zhou, 2014).

The term "communication strategies" was initially created by Selinker (1972) in the concept of interlanguage. Selinker put an emphasis on the fact that few non-native speakers can attain native-like language ability. In order to interact and achieve complete meaning in a target language, interlanguage came into being, which refers to the type of language used by EFL/ESL learners who are learning a target language (Selinker, 1972). But Selinker did not discuss the nature of CS in detail (Dörnyei & Scott, 1995). Váradi (1973) delivered a speech a year later, at an European conference, which was mainly taken as the earliest systematic analysis of strategic language behavior (especially in the terms of message adjustment) but it was not the first published study on communication

strategies (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). Even though it was casually dispersed amongst academics, it only got published in the year 1980. By then, Tarone had published two studies concerning CSs, which are the first comprehensive definition of CSs and a taxonomy that still is perceived as one of the most prominent theories in the arena of Second Language Acquisition (henceforth SLA) (Dörnyei & Scott, 1995).

Actually, the real "career" of Oral Communication Strategies (henceforth OCSs) has been initiated since the early 1980s in the field of SLA. Firstly, Tarone (1981) observed the interactive trait of communication strategies and considered communication as an essential factor in defining CS. The main characteristic of the interactive trait of CS was the compromise of an agreement on meaning. Researchers stated CS as mutual efforts of interlocutors to deal with communication problems with regard to differing social aspects (L. Q. Hua, 2010; Tarone, 1980; Zhou, 2014). Participants make massive and forceful efforts to surmount their lack of linguistic knowledge during communication and both parties try to design a CS to break the misunderstanding. This interactional approach is distinguished by negotiation for meaning between interlocutors (L. Q. Hua, 2010; Tarone, 1980; Zhou, 2014)

Secondly, Færch and Kasper (1983) delivered a theory of strategies in interlanguage communication stating that CS are possibly mindful tactics for resolving what to a person shows itself as a problem in reaching a certain communicative goal. The above definition illustrates that learners depend more on self-help instead of asking for assistance from interlocutors, such as asking for help and negotiating for meaning while speaking. In short, Faerch and Kasper's (1983) explanation of CS merely put an emphasis on ESL learners' spontaneously dealing with linguistic problems. However, they overlooked the prime role of assistance provided by the interlocutor during communication (Zhou, 2014).

In 1997, Dörnyei and Scott made further extension of the scope of CS to involve every potential attempt to deal with linguistic-related problems in which the utterer is mindful of what strategies he/she is applying in the process of communication. Furthermore, Dörnyei and Scott's scientific classification of communication strategies contains three chief categories (direct, indirect, and interactional), which are based on communicative problems. Moreover, there are some overlaps on these CSs such as achievement strategies, reduction strategies, cooperative strategies and non-linguistic strategies with previous researchers like Tarone, Færch & Kasper's compensatory strategies and avoidance strategies. Dörnyei and Scott's taxonomy set a good foundation for further comments on CS, which are crucially important strategies in second language learning (L. Q. Hua, 2010).

2.3 Classifications of Communication Strategies

As there is no agreement on the holistic definitions of CS, there is no consensus on classifications of CS, either. Varieties of classifications have been illustrated by Tarone (1981), Færch & Kasper (1983), Dörnyei (1995), and Nakatani (2006), among others.

Tarone's classification of interactive CS include nine subjects, which were separated into five categories, as follows:

1. *Paraphrase*

a) Approximation: The speaker uses a word or structure, knowing it is incorrect, but displays sufficient semantic features in common with the item sought after (e.g. using the word 'pipe' instead of 'water pipe').

b) Word coinage: The speaker coins up new vocabulary to share the desired concept (e.g.

"air ball" for balloon).

c) Circumlocution: The speaker talks about an action as an alternative of using the proper target language item (e.g. He is smoking something. I don't know what it is.)

2. *Transfer*

a) Literal translation: The speaker translates word for word from the native language (L1).

b) Language switch: The speaker uses the L1 without bothering to translate.

3. *Appeal for assistance*

a) Appeal for assistance: The speaker asks the interlocutor for the correct term (e.g. What is this or How do you call this?)

4. *Mime*

a) Mime: The speaker uses non-verbal strategies

5. *Avoidance*

a) Topic Avoidance: The speaker, lacking the necessary vocabulary to refer to an object or action, avoids any mention of it, e.g., 'wears a … pair of enormous trousers' (braces).

b) Message abandonment: The speaker begins to talk about a concept but, feeling that they are unable to continue, stops in mid-utterance, e.g. "a shirt with … eh … umm … … I don't know" (tie).

The dominance of Tarone's classification is succinct and well-understood. Nonetheless, Tarone's explanation of CS is not enough (Bialystok, 1990; Dörnyei & Scott, 1995; R. L. Oxford, 1989; Zhou, 2014). Other scholars stated that CS should be combined with the usage and the problems faced with in the process of interaction. As pointed by Yang and Gai (2010), Tarone's communication strategies do not give a clarification on exactly how the strategy may have worked to reach the aim of communication. Moreover, the

classification of some CS types might seem obscure. For example, word coinage in the category of paraphrase could also be in the category of transfer (Zhou, 2014).

In the psychological-based problem-solving framework projected by Færch and Kasper (1984), they stated that CS is to provide a solution to linguistic-related problems interlocutors faced with in the planning phase of communication. According to this framework, the strategies are classified into reduction strategies and achievement strategies. "Reduction strategies such as meaning replacement, message abandonment and topic avoidance are used for the purpose of giving up a fragment of the original communication goal. On the other hand, achievement strategies such as appealing for assistance, code-switching, paraphrasing, non-verbal strategies are used to maintain the original goal of the language user." Færch and Kasper's classification was introduced as the most significant taxonomy which should be regarded as applicable (T. K. Hua, Nor, & Jaradat, 2012; Lin, 2013; Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011). However, their CS lack the type of problem-solving devices, e.g. negotiation for meaning, requesting and clarification, which encompass the management of difficulties that have already appeared in the progress of communication.

In 1997, Dörnyei and Scott introduced the dominant part of the classification of CSs based on the previous researchers, such as (Færch & Kasper, 1983, 1984; Tarone, 1977). In addition, Dörnyei & Scott (1997) offered their own taxonomy concerning three primary types (direct, indirect and interactional), which are based on varieties of communicative issues (resource shortage, control time pressure, own performance issues, as well as other performance problems).

Direct strategies "provide an alternative solution, workable, as well as self-contained way of receiving the meaning throughout", such as circumlocution, approximation, word-coinage, mime etc. (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997, p. 198). Indirect strategies "do not provide alternative meaning structures, but rather facilitate the conveyance of meaning indirectly by creating the conditions for achieving mutual understanding," e.g., using of fillers, or pretending to understand (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997, p. 198). Interactional strategies "involve a third approach, whereby the participants carry out troubleshooting exchanges cooperatively," e.g., appealing for help, asking for clarification or confirmation (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997, p. 199). Dörnyei and Scott's taxonomy is in such great detail that the subtypes under the three categories not only encompass most of the CSs (e.g., reduction, approximation, circumlocution, word coinage, mime, appeals for help etc.) in the taxonomies of Tarone (1977, 1983), Færch and Kasper (1983), but also include some distinctive strategies (e.g., asking for clarification, asking for confirmation, use of fillers, etc.) (Yang, 2003).

2.4 Theoretical Framework of Nakatani

This study is anchored on the theory of interactional CS developed by Dörnyei and Scott (1997). In problem management, interactional CS are paramount as they are used to maintain the communication flow between participants and to prevent communication breakdown (Tarone, 1980). This means, the interlocutors can effectively communicate their intentions in a communicative task and apply strategies during communication to seek assistance for any lack of linguistic resources.

Furthermore, as pointed out by Nakatani (2006), almost all preceding researches have typically labeled CS into two kinds: achievement (or compensatory) strategies and

avoidance (or reduction) strategies. The Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (henceforth, OCSI) developed by Nakatani (2006) combine characteristics from a lot of these chief taxonomies of CS. The strong point of Nakatani's (2006) classification is that he centered on the interactive trait of conversation in actual non-native speaking context. As the interactive nature of CS is emphasized in this study, Nakatani's (2006) classification of CS will be adapted. Moreover, as the study focuses only on the strategies for coping with speaking problems, a modified version of speaking strategies within Nakatani's OCSI will be used.

The eight categories of CS dealing with speaking problems include: 1) *social affective strategies*, which are concerned with learners' affective factors in social contexts, such as controlling their anxiety and encouraging themselves to continue engaging in oral communication with others or to risk making mistakes, or even ask for assistance while encountering difficulties during interaction; 2) *fluency-oriented strategies*, which mean learners paying attention to rhythm, intonation, pronunciation and clarity and also rehearse what they are going to say in brain and then organize the structure or write down the key points if necessary. They will also consider the speaking context in order not to display unsuitable messages to conversers; 3) *negotiation for meaning as speaking strategies*, which refer to participants' strategic behaviors or actions to interact with interlocutors to improve comprehension, such as repeating of speech and example-giving in order to be understood. Moreover, speakers use synonyms to clarify meaning and also make comprehension checks by asking questions to the reaction of their interlocutors whether they can understand each other; 4) *accuracy-oriented strategies*, which mean speakers' desire to speak accurately, such as paying attention to grammatical range and accuracy, referring to knowledge or imitating native speakers' accent; 5) *message reduction and alteration strategies*, which refer to participants' strategic behaviors or

actions to evade communication failure by shortening the initial message, abridging utterances, or substituting difficult expression with alternative expressions that they are more confident with; 6) *non-verbal strategies*, which involve learners using eye contact, gestures or facial expressions to express their intention to the listener; 7) *message abandonment strategies*, which refer to participants' strategic actions to abandon their communication effort completely or leave the message unfinished while encountering difficulties; 8) *attempt to think in English strategies*, which required the learner to think as much as possible in English during interaction.

2.5 Oral English Language proficiency related to the use of Communication Strategies

The language proficiency of a learner is an essential determinant in the selection of communication strategies. Several previous researchers have investigated the relationship between the English language proficiency of university students and their use of language learning strategies. They discovered that a greatly connected relationship exists in the middle of the language proficiency of students and their strategy usage (Goh & Foong, 1997; Lee & Oxford, 2008; R. Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Goh and Foong (1997) conducted a research study on 175 Chinese ESL students who were registered in an intensive English program at a university in Singapore. They realized that the higher proficiency scholars used strategies more often compared to ones who had a lower language proficiency, especially in cognitive and compensation strategies. Moreover, Yang (2010) looked into the relationship between the practice of Oxford's Language Learning Strategies (1990) as well as the self-assessed language proficiency among Korean EFL university students (Hazlia Azila, 2012). The study found that high language proficiency students use metacognitive strategies most, but intermediate and low proficiency learners employ

compensation strategies most. All the three levels of learners preferred memory strategies least. Also, Yang mentioned that less proficient language learners need to use compensation strategies more in order to compensate for their lack of linguistic knowledge (Hazlia Azila, 2012).

On the other side of the coin, Chen (1990) and Tuan (2001) said that those of high language proficiency used fewer strategies to communicate the intended meaning (Ugla, binti Adnan, & Abidin, 2012). A similar study was conducted by Fewell (2010) in a Japanese EFL university. He chose the top 25% scorers and bottom 25% scorers of an English proficiency test from English and Business majors, and compared the language learning strategies used by the top and bottom groups for each major (Hazlia Azila, 2012). However, Fewell's findings that were related to the English majors contrasted with most previous results because "In each separate category , the SILL score of the bottom group was higher than the top group", while his findings for the Business majors showed that the bottom group use more compensation and social strategies than the top group. These past studies examined the use of learners' language learning strategies use and their correlation to general language proficiency while the present study chooses to narrow the selection of language learning strategies to OCSs that are related to students' OP when communicating in English.

Nakatani's (2006) Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) has been utilized to scrutinize the usage of CS throughout various nations, with some research concentrating on the dissimilarities in the usage of CS amongst high and low language proficiency groups. Many researchers have discovered that high proficiency learners were more likely to use social affective strategies, negotiation for meaning strategies, accuracy-oriented strategies (Chen, 2009; Chiang, 2011; Chuanchaisit & Prapphal, 2009; Nakatani, 2006).

Such strategies could be beneficial for them to continue the conversation and attain interaction through negotiation with interlocutors. Low proficiency language learners rely more on message abandonment strategies or topic avoidance (Chen, 2009; Mei & Nathalang, 2010; Nakatani, 2006; Wannaruk, 2003; Yaman & Özcan, 2015). This means that the learners with high proficiency have further capability to select the strategies that suit best to interact in the target language via using their linguistic knowledge, whilst ones with lower proficiency were not able to carry out equivalent effort (Ugla et al., 2012).

Basically, the outcomes through these researches seem to show that high proficiency language users are more inclined to have efficient achievement strategies to better enhance their communication whilst low proficiency users are more inclined to practice reduction strategies.

Nevertheless, studies do not entirely say that the relationship between oral proficiency and the usage of oral communication strategies (Huang, 2010; Metcalfe & Noom-Ura, 2013). Huang (2010) saw that there was no difference in communication strategies usage across high and low proficiency groups and in its place discovered that the regularity of speaking English outside the classroom and motivation significantly correlated with communication strategies' usage.

Nevertheless, some studies (LAM & 林婉君, 2006; Lin, 2013) demonstrated that there is a significant correlation between language learners' oral proficiency and the usage of oral communication strategies. The present study will refer to Nakatani's 2006 study for the finding which indicated that OP can be enhanced by OCSs.

2.6 Previous studies on students' usage of communication strategies in English Language

The research on Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs) has been done since the 1980s in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The most representative taxonomy was Dörnyei and Scott's (1997) interactional communication strategies, which consist of achievement strategies and avoidance strategies. Subsequently, Oxford (1996) and Nakatani (2006) respectively developed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI). Although SILL is an effective instrument for finding the strength and weakness of learners' individual strategy use, SILL may be not relevant to identify the task-specific strategies (Nakatani, 2006). But Nakatani's OCSI (2006) is a synthesized inventory to select individual's communication strategies in interaction (Chen, 2009; Zhou, 2014).

Previous studies have focused on undergraduates' perceptions towards their problems in speaking English in terms of the linguistic and affective-related problems. These studies adapted Rujipornwasin's (2004) questionnaire on "Students' Perceptions towards their Problems in Speaking English by focusing on Language-related and Affective-related items" and Nakanoko's (2004) questionnaire on "Students' Strategies for Spoken English by focusing on Cognitive strategies and Functional-use strategies adapted from SILL" (Oxford, 1990). They found that ESL students have problems in speaking English, such as vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical weakness. Similarly, Finn (2010) discussed that ESOL learners' pronunciation of certain words can cause misunderstanding not due to inaccuracy but due to their strong accent (Hazlia Azila, 2012).

Likewise, some other researchers such as Zulkurnain and Kaur (2014) from Malaysia employed OCSI to investigate the difficulties faced by UiTM hotel management students in English communication and their strategies to overcome those difficulties. The study found that Malaysian university students commonly made five grammatical errors: "preposition", "question form", "word form", "article" and "verb form". The study also found that the most frequently used strategies are social affective strategies, followed by fluency-oriented and accuracy strategies; whereas, attempting to think in English is the least used one.

Similarly, Yousef, Jamil and Razak (2013) employed OCSI to investigate Malaysian university students' readiness to interact in English in the ESL classroom. The study found that the usage of OCSs directly affects students' oral proficiency, readiness to interact in English and motivation, as well as, indirectly have an influence on students' communication confidence and communication apprehension. The study also found that students commonly used negotiation of meaning strategy, followed by message abandonment strategy, message reduction and alteration strategy and social-affective strategy.

Other researchers also focused on identifying specific oral communication strategies. For example, Liu (2010) conducted a research in Malaysia on communication strategies (achievement strategies and avoidance strategies) used by Chinese students from China in spoken English, which found out that stalling and time gaining strategy is the most frequently used strategy by students, followed by code-switching and non-verbal strategies, with literal translation being the least used one. In addition, (Zhou, 2014) employed OCSI to identify the CSs used by Chinese English- as-an-additional-language (EAL) graduate students (Advanced and Intermediate level) in Canada. The study found

that non-verbal strategies, fluency-oriented strategies and accuracy-oriented strategies are the highest employed by students, whereas message abandonment strategies are least made use of. The identified communication strategy results corroborate with Abunawas (2012) and Bialystok's (1983) findings that speakers with high proficient levels employed more achievement strategies rather than avoidance strategies.

To conclude, ten dissertations and journals were found dealing with ESL/EFL University students' perceptions towards their language-related and affective-related problems in speaking English and the corresponding oral communication strategies they used. Previous studies have made great achievements in investigating oral communications strategies. However, very few of them identified the reasons for use of certain OCSs by students, especially for pre-university Malaysian Chinese students in the Malaysian context with English as a second language. Thus, the current study will focus on pre-university Malaysian Chinese students' communication strategies in oral English interaction.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided comprehensive knowledge of key concepts and relevant researches pertaining to this study. Definitions and classifications of communication strategies were discussed at the beginning, which emphasized on the important role of communication strategies in speaking. The second part of this chapter focused on the relationship between language proficiency and the usage of communication strategies. The third part introduced previous studies on students' use of oral communication strategies

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description on the methods used to collect research data from both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to answer the research questions presented in Chapter 1. This chapter consists of the following sections: 1) Research design and Instruments; 2) Participants; 3) Pilot study; 4) Data collection procedures; 5) Ethical consideration; 6) Data analysis.

3.2 Research Design and Instruments

This study uses a descriptive research method where it starts with a quantitative approach and is followed by a qualitative approach.

3.2.1 Quantitative approach

The quantitative approach is commonly used for the purpose of assessing behaviour, knowledge, opinions and attitudes among a group of subjects, usually using a survey questionnaire (Cooper, Schindler, & Sun, 2006). There are several reasons why a quantitative questionnaire survey is used in this study. Firstly, according to (Sekaran, 2006), a questionnaire survey will increase the speed and accuracy of recording and facilitate data processing as large amounts of information can be collected from a large number of pre-university Malaysian Chinese students effectively. Secondly, the quantitative approach questionnaire survey in the study is used to ask specific questions,

thus, precise and quantitative numerical data will be provided. The questionnaire will be purposively distributed to 60 respondents.

In this study, the quantitative approach was employed to answer the first research question, which is on the students' Oral Communication Strategies and the second research question on whether there is a significant relationship between Oral English language proficiency and OCSs. In addition, in order to answer the second research question, Spearman correlation coefficients were used to measure and describe the relationship between proficiency and OCSs, for they are ordinal datum.

The quantitative approach was done through questionnaire sheets which consisted of: (a) Informed Consent form and (b) Oral Communication Strategy Inventory. The Informed Consent form was provided to obtain voluntary consent to participate in the study and they can withdraw from participation at any time. The Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) by Nakatani (2006) was adapted to investigate the OCSs employed by the participants.

3.2.1.1 Instrument

To investigate the most frequent strategies used by students with different proficiencies and the relationship between their oral proficiency and OCSs, the Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) developed by Nakatani (2006) was chosen (See Appendix C). The OCSI elicits learners' spoken English language strategy as it encompasses both the speakers' and the listeners' strategies for interaction given any communicative task. Furthermore, it also covers the scope of meaning for negotiation strategies in the face of tackling communication problems. Nevertheless, speaking strategies and listening

strategies are not integrated and can be separated. This current study only concerns the speaking strategies for dealing with speaking problems. Thus, in order to overcome the students' burdens in speaking, only the section on Communication Strategies for dealing with Speaking Problems was used. The section was adapted after obtaining permission from Nakatani by email. Nakatani's OCSI was chosen for this study as it is a synthesized inventory, in which most non-native speakers' perspectives and communicative problems encounter are taken into account (Chen, 2009). Moreover, the OCSI is widely used to investigate communication strategy used throughout various countries since its publication in 2006 (Brown, 2013; Yaman & Irgin, 2013).

There were two sections in the questionnaire. The first section was on the demographic information of respondents, which helped to collect students' background information such as age, gender, MUET overall score and MUET speaking test score. The second section of the questionnaire, *Strategies for Coping with Speaking Problems* consisted of eight types of OCSs: social affective strategies, fluency-oriented strategies, negotiation for meaning while speaking strategies, accuracy-oriented strategies, message reduction and alteration strategies, nonverbal strategies, message abandonment strategies, and attempt to think in English strategies. There were 32 statements in the questionnaire covering all the 8 types of OCSs. In this study, participants' responses were gathered using the items on five scales (*Never* to *Always*) of the Likert scale in part B on the questionnaire. (Refer to the Appendix C). The values of the scales were assigned from 1 to 5, with 5 (*Always*) being the highest value, while 1 (*Never*) was the lowest value, which showed the data was ordinal.

3.2.2 Qualitative approach

A qualitative approach was conducted through structured interviews after the questionnaire distribution. Structured interviews provide the precision and reliability required in certain situations (Creswell, 2009). The purpose of conducting this qualitative approach was to answer the third research question, which is to identify the reasons for using certain OCSs by participants.

3.2.2.1 Structured interview

Structured interviews were carried out to identify the oral communication strategies engaged by students with proficient levels and satisfactory levels in speaking and to get a better understanding of the reasons they used certain OCSs. The interviews were done with nine students who volunteered to participate. There were two proficient level students, five satisfactory level students and two modest level students respectively. About eight interview questions were asked following one guideline, which was "why students used the certain OCSs in speaking?" This guideline was extended into eight questions during the interview, which are as follows:

1. Can you name 3 of the most frequently used Oral Communication Strategies? Can you explain briefly when, why and how do you use them?

2. Do you use Message Reduction and Alteration Strategies in speaking?

   • If yes, when do you use it? How do you use and why?

   • If no, why?

3. Do you use Non-verbal Strategies in speaking?

   • If yes, when do you use it? How do you use it and why?

   • If no, why?

4. Do you use Social-affective strategies?

   - If yes, in what kind of situation, could you give one or two examples? And why do you use it?

   - If no, why?

5. Do you use Fluency-oriented strategies in speaking?

   - If yes, could you give one or two examples by explaining why you use it?

   - If no, why?

6. Do you use Negotiation for meaning while speaking strategies?

   - If yes, could you give one or two examples by explaining when and how you use it? And why?

   - If no, why?

7. What are the least frequently used strategies for you? And why?

8. After knowing which Oral Communication Strategies, do you think your oral proficiency has been improved? To what extent?

These eight interview questions were constructed according to the research objectives. The interview session was conducted on campus and the interviewees were allowed to choose a place they felt comfortable in. English was used as the language interaction and the whole process took an average of about thirty minutes for each interviewee.

3.3 Participants of the study

The participants for this study were pre-university Malaysian Chinese students with Mandarin as their mother tongue and English as a second language in a matriculation college. It was chosen as a sample pre-university because it is located in Selangor and the participants were representatives since they were from different states of Malaysia and it

represents one of the outstanding pre-universities with regard to academic results in Malaysia of which the findings would be more representative (Yeoh & Ierardi, 2015).

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

The study aimed at recruiting participants who have taken MUET. Their levels of mastery in English were identified based on the MUET result, especially their speaking grade as the speaking tasks in the MUET test is a benchmark accessing students' oral English language proficiency. MUET result is required to gain admissions into all public universities and colleges in Malaysia. To fulfill the university admission requirement, students' language proficiency level should be above Band 3 upon graduation from university.

There were several reasons for choosing these participants for the study. The most important one was to fill the research gap. The study about investigating the OCSs used by pre-university Malaysian Chinese students is sparse so far. Secondly, the pre-university had the most suitable group of students to examine whether the speaking skills they had learned in secondary school were effective for higher education needs. This also would provide an opportunity to secondary teachers and teaching curriculum designers to check and evaluate their English speaking pedagogical activities (Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, 2003, p.1).

3.3.2 Sampling Method

Sampling involves the selection of a smaller set of data from the bigger group (the sampling population) as a proxy to estimate the result of the bigger group (Kumar, Liang,

Linderman, & Chen, 2011). For the purpose of this research, a purposive sampling was used. According to Creswell (2009), a purposive sampling refers to a selected group of participants who had been chosen based on the need of this study, therefore only Malaysian Chinese students in KMS were selected.

The participants identified for this study were 60 pre-university Malaysian Chinese students who came from different states of Malaysia. The demographics information of the participants was obtained from the first part of the questionnaire which included gender, age, MUET speaking score, etc. The second part of the questionnaire was Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (henceforth OCSI). For the selection of participants in the interview, the research still used purposeful sampling to select 9 students based on MUET speaking test, including 2 proficient level students (Band 5), 5 satisfactory level students (Band 4) and 2 modest level students (Band 3). The justification for such sampling is, the majority of students achieved Band 4, while a minority of the students obtained Band 5 and the rest were Band 3 (See Table 3.8, p45).

3.4 Pilot study

Seliger, Shohamy & Shohamy (1989) stated that a pilot study is beneficial for increasing the quality of the research data. The purpose of this pilot study was to field-test the data collection instruments and implement data collection procedures. The process of the pilot study was almost the same as the main study. The pilot study was done in two stages. In the first stage, the Cronbach's alpha results of items were comparatively low, so in order to re-test the reliability of the items, a second stage pilot testing was conducted.

The first stage of the pilot study was conducted in March 2015, before the main study, which aimed to check the clarity and comprehension of the items in the questionnaire. There were 64 Malaysian Chinese students in a matriculation college who participated in the pilot study. Their participation was voluntary. In the pilot study, each participant completed the background information questionnaire and the OCSI questionnaire. The results showed that the participants did not understand the items in the questionnaire thoroughly. Thus, the researcher carefully reviewed the instrument with the guidance of a supervisor and conducted questionnaire modifications.

The second pilot study was carried out a couple of days before the questionnaire distribution for the main study. There were twelve undergraduates from different faculties at University of Malaya participating in the pilot study. After they completed the modified questionnaire, the researcher had a conversation with them to check whether they had any confusion while answering the questionnaire. The participants responded that all the 31 items in the questionnaire were clear and understood.

In addition, a five to ten- minute group or individual interview was conducted in the first stage pilot study as well. However, due to time constraints (during that period students were preparing for examinations), a teacher helped the researcher to conduct the group interviews in order to save students' time. Only 18 students were willing to be interviewed.

3.4.1 First stage pilot study

A total of 64 students took part in the pilot study. Information on the participants' demographics and background was obtained through the questionnaire (See Table 3.1

below). This questionnaire was designed to gather information related to participants'
gender, age, MUET overall score, MUET speaking test score and etc.

Table 3.1: Demographics and Background of Participants in the first stage pilot study

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	22	34.4%
Female	42	65.6%
Age		
18 Years old	6	9.4%
19 Years old	57	89.1%
20 Years old	1	1.6%
Score level of the test		
Band 3	7	10.9%
Band 4	41	64.1%
Band 5	16	25.0%
Score level of the speaking test		
Band 3	5	7.8%
Band 4	23	35.9%
Band 5	35	54.7%
Band 6	1	1.6%

As shown in Table 3.1, out of the 64 respondents, 65.6% were females and 34.4% were
males. They were from various states. 12 (18.8%) came from Selangor. Another 10
(15.6%) respectively came from Negeri Sembilan, Perak and Penang. 7 (10.9%) were
from Pahang, 5 (7.8%) were from Kedah, 4 (6.3%) and 2 (3.1%) were from Johor and
Malacca separately. The rest of 3 (4.7%) and 1 (1.6%) came from Kuala Lumpur and
Kelantan.

Most of the respondents (n=57 or 89.1%) were in the age group of 19 years old, 6 (9.4%)
18 years old and 1 (1.6%) were 20 years old. The majority (95.3%) of the students stated

that their mother tongue was Chinese, while 1 (1.6%) was English and 2 (3.1%) was Chinese and English.

Concerning their overall score, 64.1% reported as Band 4, 25% were Band 5, and only 10.9% were Band 3. In regard to their speaking score, 1 (1.6%) achieved Band 6, 54.7% attained Band 5, 35.9% were Band 4, and 7.8% were Band 3. All in all, their overall English language and speaking proficiency was fairly good.

Reliability of the items in the original questionnaire stage one

The internal consistency reliability of the items in the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The questions in the questionnaire were divided into eight sub-constructs. They were listed below.

- Factor 1: Social-affective strategies, which are concerned with learners' affective factors in a social context (Nakatani, 2006), such as controlling their anxiety and encouraging themselves to continue engaging in oral communication with others or to risk making mistakes, even asking for assistance while encountering difficulties during interaction.

- Factor 2: Fluency-oriented strategies, which mean learners' paying attention to rhythm, intonation, pronunciation and clarity (Nakatani, 2006).

- Factor 3: Negotiation for meaning strategies, which refer to participants' strategic behaviors or actions to interact with interlocutors to improve comprehension, such as repeating of speech and examples-giving in order to be understood.

- Factor 4: Accuracy-oriented strategies, which mean speakers' desires to speak accurately.

- Factor 5: Message reduction and alteration strategies, which refer to participants'

strategic behaviors or actions to avoid communication breakdowns by shortening the original message, simplifying utterances, or substituting difficult expressions with alternative expressions that they are more confident with.

- Factor 6: Non-verbal strategies, which involve learners using eye contact, gestures or facial expressions to express their intention to the listener.

- Factor 7: Message abandonment strategies, which refer to participants' strategic actions to abandon their communication effort completely or leave the message unfinished while encountering difficulties.

- Factor 8: Attempt to think in English strategies, which required the learner to think as much as possible in English during interaction.

Cronbach's Alpha values for each sub-construct are shown in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Cronbach's Alpha for each sub-construct in the original questionnaire stage one

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Factor 1 .574	x1 x2 x3 x4 x5 x6	-.196 .420 .451 .472 .382 .457	.719 .489 .456 .454 .497 .466
Factor 2 .780	X7 X8 X9 X10 X11 X12	.370 .281 .700 .656 .593 .568	.780 .802 .698 .713 .729 .736
Factor 3 .696	X13 X14 X15 X16	.536 .585 .464 .385	.599 .573 .642 .717
Factor 4 .774	X17 X18 X19 X20 X21	.708 .562 .554 .457 .484	.669 .728 .730 .761 .761
Factor 5 .409	X22 X23 X24	.088 .305 .357	.564 .192 .075
Factor 6 .539	X25 X26	.369 .369	
Factor 7 .559	X27 X28 X29 X30	.455 .397 .345 .211	.413 .439 .486 .601
Factor 8 .243	X31 X32	.139 .139	

Results of each sub-construct

The items indicated their Cronbach's alpha results were comparatively low, only Factor 2, Factor 3 and Factor 4 Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was in the range of 0.65 to 0.95 (See Table 3.2). The other five factors were less than 0.65. This was probably caused by the fact that the respondents did not understand the questionnaire thoroughly and Malaysia is a multi-cultural context which is not monolingual, while Nakatani's OCSI design was used for monolingual context. Thus, it was necessary to modify the inventory before the main study.

After very careful examination with a supervisor, the researcher rephrased several items in order to make them more understandable for participants, which are shown in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: OCSI Modification in this study

Original item	Modified item	Reasons
Social-affective strategy category: Items1:"I try to use fillers when I cannot think of what to say."	"I try to use fillers (e.g. I mean…, well…, you know…, actually…) when I cannot think of what to say in English."	1st as some participants didn't understand what "fillers" meant, the researcher exemplified "fillers" with "I mean, well, you know, actually". 2nd Malaysia is a multi-lingual context, where normally Chinese people can speak at least three languages, which are Bahasa Malaysia, English and Chinese. Thus, the researcher needed to emphasize that it was in the context of English-speaking instead of any other languages.
Item4: "I try to enjoy the conversation".	"I try to enjoy conversing in English"	Focused specifically on the English language in order to make it more specific and clear to the participants.
Item6: "I actively encourage myself to express what I want to say".	"I actively encourage myself to express what I want to say in English"	Same as above.

Fluency-oriented strategy category: Item10: "I try to speak clearly and loudly to make myself heard".	"I try to speak clearly to make myself understood when I speak in English".	Same as above.
Negotiation for meaning strategy category: Item13: "While speaking, I pay attention to the listener's reaction to my speech"	"While speaking in English, I pay attention to the listener's reaction to my speech".	As the participants were Malaysian Chinese students who were able to speak at least three languages, the researcher needed to remind the participants and emphasize all the time that it was in the context of English-speaking.
Item15: "I repeat what I want to say until the listener understands"	"I repeat what I want to say in English until the listener understands".	Emphasize that it was in the English-speaking context.
Item14: "I give examples if the listener doesn't understand what I'm saying".	"I give examples if the listener doesn't understand what I'm saying in the language understood by the listener".	To make it more specific and clear to the participants.
Accuracy-oriented strategy category: Item17: "I pay attention to grammar and word order during conversation".	"I pay attention to grammar used when I converse in English".	Might be easier for participants to understand and respond to this item.
Item20: "I notice myself using an expression which fits a rule that I have learned".	"I try to apply the English grammar rules when I speak in English".	To make this item more specific to the participants.
Item21: "I try to talk like a native speaker".	"I try to talk like a native speaker of English".	Since Malaysia is a multi-lingual environment.
Message reduction and alteration strategy category: Item22: "I use words which are familiar to me".	"I use words which are familiar to me in English".	To make this item more specific.
Item23:"I reduce the message and use simple expressions".	"I try to avoid complicated expression and use simple expressions".	As participants felt obscure on understanding the original item.
Item24:"I replace the original message with another message because of feeling incapable of executing my original intent".	The researcher decided to delete Item 24.	If it was deleted, the Cronbach's alpha would ascend to 0.774 from 0.550.
Non-verbal strategy category: Item26:"I use gestures and facial expressions if I cannot communicate how to express myself".	"I use gestures and facial expressions if I cannot find the appropriate words to express myself".	To make this item more understandable to participants.
Message abandonment strategy category: Item27:"I abandon the execution of a verbal plan and just say some words when I don't know what to say".	By adding "in English" at the end of the sentence.	To make it more specific and clear to the participants.
Item28:"I leave a message unfinished because of some language difficulty".	"I leave a message unfinished if I can't make myself understood".	The original items were like Japanese-English, which could give misunderstanding to Malaysian Chinese participants. Thus, the modification was needed.

Item30:"I give up when I can't make myself understood".	"I stop speaking in English when I realize I can't make it".	Japanese English

Validity of the items in the original questionnaire

The 32 items are valid in terms of discriminant validity — inter-correlation among items are <0.85. The items are free of the multi-co-linearity problem. (See Appendix D)

Interview session in the first stage pilot study

Structured interviews, or fixed format interviews, are interviews in which all questions are prepared in advance and are placed for the interviewee in the same sequence. Even though this method lacks free flow conversation, it has the precision and reliability needed in certain conditions (Creswell, 2009). The structured interviews were conducted in the pilot study to validate ambiguous responses obtained from the questionnaire survey. This explains why some of the questions asked in the interview sessions were similar to the questionnaire. Eighteen students participated in the interviews on April 22nd and 23rd, 2015 in front of the matriculation college library. Among the interviewees, there was one student with very proficient level (Band 6), 10 students with proficient level (Band 5) and 7 students with satisfactory level (Band 4) respectively. Table 3.4 (on page 40) shows the most frequently used strategies based on these 18 interviewees in pre-determined situations.

The five interview questions are listed below:

- Question1: Before taking MUET Speaking test, what strategies will you use to practice and enhance your oral communication proficiency? And why?

- Question2: Have you presented in class before? While preparing for a presentation, what kind of Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs) will you employ to improve your presentation? And why?

- Question3: Normally, do you use English to communicate with teachers or classmates? If yes, what communication strategies will you use? And why? If no, what languages will you use and why?

- Question4: During the one-year study in pre-university/KMS, do you think your English language proficiency has been improved or not? What Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs) do you use in speaking English? And why?

- Question5: Since you got started speaking English, do you think your oral

Through the structured interview in the pilot study, the researcher found that students with different proficiency levels employed different types of OCSs in some pre-determined situations. For example, to practice and enhance their oral communication proficiency before taking the MUET speaking test, the student with a very proficient level (Band 6) mainly uses two strategies, which are fluency-oriented strategies and accuracy-oriented while learners with proficient level (Band 5) prefer one more strategy which is social-affective. Likewise, satisfactory level learners (Band 4) also have a preference for social-affective strategies. What's more, a minority of students with proficient and satisfactory level employ strategies of attempting to think in English, negotiation for meaning and non-verbal as well. Concerning the situation of preparing for presentations, the student with a very proficient level (Band 6) employs strategies of negotiation for meaning, social-affective and accuracy-oriented. Similarly, a majority of proficient level (Band 5) students choose accuracy-oriented, fluency-oriented and social affective strategies, a minority of them use non-verbal and attempt to think in English strategies, which is the same as a few satisfactory level (Band 4) learners. But social-affective

strategies are popularly used among satisfactory level learners in this kind of situation. In regard to the situation of communicating with teachers and classmates, the student with Band 6 uses strategies of accuracy-oriented, negotiation for meaning, non-verbal and message reduction and alteration. In the same way, Band 5 students also choose strategies of message reduction and alteration. Besides that, they have choices of fluency-oriented, social-affective, negotiation for meaning and nonverbal. Only a few of them would use Mandarin or Bahasa Malaysia to communicate with teachers and classmates. However, a majority of Band 4 students prefer Mandarin or Bahasa Malaysia. In addition, a minority of Band 4 students use negotiation for meaning, social-affective and non-verbal strategies.

Table 3.4: Summary of the most frequently used strategies by participants in the pilot study interview

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
Band6	Fluency-oriented Accuracy-oriented	Social-affective Negotiation for meaning Accuracy- oriented	Accuracy- oriented Negotiation for meaning Non-verbal Message reduction and alteration	Social-affective Accuracy-oriented Message reduction and alteration	Social-affective Negotiation for meaning Accuracy-oriented
Band5	Social-affective Fluency-oriented Accuracy-oriented	Accuracy- oriented Social-affective Fluency-oriented	Message reduction and alteration Fluency-oriented Social-affective use Mandarin Bahasa Malaysia	Social-affective Fluency-oriented Non-verbal	Fluency-oriented Social-affective Negotiation for meaning
Band4	Social-affective Fluency-oriented	Social-affective Fluency-oriented Accuracy- oriented Non-verbal	Message reduction and alteration Social-affective Negotiation for meaning Non-verbal use Mandarin Bahasa Malaysia	Social-affective	Social-affective

However, the findings in this interview somehow contradict with Nakatani's classification that high oral proficient level students have a preference to social-affective strategies, fluency-oriented strategies and negotiation for meaning strategies, while low proficiency learners use message reduction and alteration strategies. In the interview of the pilot study, with respect to the case of communicating with teachers and classmates, very proficient and proficient level learners still choose Factor 5, which is message reduction and alteration strategy. Therefore, the researcher made a conclusion that even

high proficiency learners still employ message reduction and alteration strategies in individual cases. Below are the comparisons of Nakatani's findings and the researcher's findings (See Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Comparisons of Nakatani's findings and the researcher's findings

Nakatani's findings		The researcher's findings	
Proficiency level	**Strategy**	**Proficiency level**	**Strategy**
High proficiency	Tend to use Social-affective; Fluency-oriented; Negotiation for meaning.	High proficiency	Accuracy-oriented; Fluency-oriented; Social-affective; Negotiation for meaning; Non-verbal; Message reduction and alteration.
Low proficiency	Commonly use Message abandonment; message reduction and alteration.		

Conclusion of the pilot study interview

The pilot study interview was done to test whether the interview questions were clear. After the analysis of pilot study interview, the researcher decided to add a couple of questions which required students to give further elaboration of their answers. Besides that, the researcher acknowledged that interviewees should be given one-to-one interviews in order to avoid peer influences.

3.4.2 Second stage pilot study

After questionnaire modifications, the questionnaire was pilot tested among 12 undergraduates from different faculties at the University of Malaya few days before the

questionnaire distribution for the main study. The demographics and background of the

participants are shown in Table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6: Demographics and Background of Participants in the modified questionnaire stage two

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	2	16.7%
Female	10	83.3%
State		
Kuala Lumpur	1	8.3%
Johor	3	25.0%
Negeri Sembilan	1	8.3%
Perak	3	25.0%
Penang	2	16.7%
Sarawak	1	8.3%
Selangor	1	8.3%
Age		
19 years old	2	16.7%
22 years old	3	25.0%
23 years old	7	58.3%
Mother tongue		
Chinese	12	100%
Major		
Engineering	7	58.3%
Medicine	3	25.0%
Estate Management	1	8.3%
Languages and Linguistics (Spanish)	1	8.3%
Current Semester		
Sem 1	2	16.7%
Sem 5	2	16.7%
Sem 6	8	66.7%
High School		
SMK Kepong Baru	1	8.3%
SMK Pandan Indah	1	8.3%
SMK Chan WA, Seremban	1	8.3%
SMJK Chung Ling Butterworth	1	8.3%
Penang Free School	1	8.3%
SMJK Hua Lian	1	8.3%
SMK Tun Perak	1	8.3%
SMK Malim Nawar	1	8.3%
SMK Ledang	1	8.3%
SMK Skudai	1	8.3%
SMK Methodist, Sibu	1	8.3%
Nan Hwa	1	8.3%
Year of Studying English		
Over 10 years	12	100.0%
Score Level		
Band 3	2	16.7%
Band 4	7	58.3%

Band 5		3	25.0%
Speaking Score Level			
Band 3		2	16.7%
Band 4		7	58.3%
Band 5		2	16.7%
Band 6		1	8.3%

Reliability of the items in the modified questionnaire in stage two

In this section the Cronbach's Alpha results of the second stage pilot test for each sub-construct are presented. In the second stage pilot test, the Cronbach's Alpha for each sub-construct is fairly satisfactory. Factor 2, Factor 3, Factor 4, Factor 6, Factor 7 and Factor 8 Cronbach's alpha coefficient values are all in the range of 0.65 to 0.95. Regarding to Factor 5, if Item 24 was deleted, the Cronbach's alpha of Factor 5 will ascend to 0.774 from 0.550 (See Table 3.7 below).

Table 3.7: Cronbach's Alpha for each sub-construct in the modified questionnaire stage two

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Factor 1	x1	.059	.668
.589	x2	.109	.649
	x3	.274	.565
	x4	.883	.313
	x5	.683	.407
	x6	.256	.575
Factor 2	X7	.272	.886
.856	X8	.416	.871
	X9	.876	.790
	X10	.834	.811
	X11	.811	.800
	X12	.770	.807
Factor 3	X13	.330	.739
.709	X14	.572	.610
	X15	.770	.499
	X16	.421	.723
Factor 4	X17	.669	.528
.690	X18	.408	.663
	X19	.251	.706
	X20	.547	.613
	X21	.423	.660
Factor 5	X22	.420	.471
.550	X23	.562	.134
	X24	**.258**	**.774**
Factor 6	X25	.794	
.885	X26	.794	
Factor 7	X27	.274	.770
.698	X28	.837	.399
	X29	.324	.719

	X30	.583	.565
Factor 8	X31	.727	
.818	X32	.727	

Thus, the researcher decided to delete the Item 24. Concerning Factor 1 with Cronbach's alpha 0.589, according to the SPSS Explained (Hinton & Brownlow, 2004), Cronbach's alpha bigger than 0.50 is also acceptable. Thus, the researcher didn't do any changes on Factor 1.

Therefore, after questionnaire modification, only 31 items are left in the questionnaire (See Appendix E).

Validity of the items in the modified questionnaire

The 31 items are valid in terms of discriminant validity— inter-correlation among items are < 0.9 (Byrne, 2001). The items are free of multi-co-linearity problems (See Appendix F).

3.5 Main Study

The researcher conducted the main study after the second stage pilot study was completed. The main study included a questionnaire and structured interviews. 60 pre-university Malaysian Chinese students at a matriculation college participated in the study.

A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed to students, but only 42 completed questionnaires were returned. The response rate was 70%. The demographics and backgrounds of the participants are shown in Table 3.8 below.

Table 3.8: The demographics and backgrounds of the participants in main study

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	10	23.8%
Female	32	76.2%
Age		
18 years old	13	31%
19 years old	27	64.3%
20 years old	2	4.8%
Score level of the test		
Band3	6	14.3%
Band 4	29	69.0%
Band 5	7	16.7%
Score level of the speaking test		
Band 3	6	14.3%
Band 4	23	54.8%
Band 5	13	31.0%

As shown in Table 3.8, out of the 42 respondents, 76.2% were females and 23.8% were males. The participants were in the age group of 18, 19 and 20 years old. Regarding the overall score of MUET, 69% reported as Band 4, 16.7% attained Band 5 and 14.3% were Band 3. Concerning their speaking score, 54.8% attained Band 4, 31% attained Band 5 and the rest of 14.3% were Band 3. Very interestingly, none of the participants' MUET overall score and speaking score were lower than Band 3.

3.6 Procedure of data collection and analysis

Quantitative data will be collected first by conducting a questionnaire survey with the participants, followed by interview sessions to collect qualitative data. This section will present the procedure for both quantitative and qualitative data collection.

3.6.1 Questionnaire survey

An email was sent to the academic director of the English department of a matriculation college in order to get permission to collect data. The researcher briefly stated the purpose, the general process of the study and contact information in the email. After permission was granted, the researcher went to the matriculation college to administer the questionnaire to the 60 Malaysian Chinese students with the assistance of a teacher and a student. The reason for this was that the teacher and the student were more familiar with participants. The questionnaire distribution began on December 1st and ended on December 3rd, 2015.

All the participants were asked for their consent by signing a consent form prior to participating in the study (See Appendix B). Then, the volunteered participants were asked to assemble in a lecture hall to fill in the questionnaire. At the beginning of the research, a briefing was given to the participants about the purpose of this study and how they should answer the questionnaire. In addition, the researcher explained each item for the students in front of a platform in order to make sure of clarity. Students were encouraged to answer all the questions honestly and carefully and all the information obtained from students was kept confidential. In the end, the researcher managed to collect 42 completed questionnaires. The response rate was 70 percent. In addition, participants were asked whether all the items in the questionnaire were clear. They responded that all the items were of clarity.

Data from the questionnaire survey were analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version20. In the first step, the descriptive statistics was used to analyze the score of OCSs, including the means values, standard deviation values, percentages as

well as the most frequently used strategies. This step of data analysis was used to answer the first research question which is to find out the OCSs used by Malaysian Chinese students in speaking. In the second step, the Spearman correlation coefficients was used to answer the second research question which is to examine whether there is any significant relationship between oral English language proficiency and OCSs usage by students.

3.6.2 Interviews

In order to avoid peer influences, the researcher conducted one-to-one structured interviews. According to (Creswell, 2002), a small size of participants is enough for qualitative study since the purpose of this type of study is to comprehend a central phenomenon. Thus, 15% of the questionnaire respondents were interviewed. It had been decided that 9 students who had been surveyed would be interviewed. Nine students were selected respectively from proficient, satisfactory and modest level groups and chosen among those who had included their contact numbers in section one of the questionnaire. The interviews with participants took place in several locations convenient to them and to the researcher, such as outside of the library and in vacant classrooms. Each student was handed a copy of the consent form assuring their confidentiality (See Appendix B). The OCSs coding was given and explained in detail to the interviewees before the structured interview session started (See Appendix G). The explanation process took about 25 minutes for each participants. This was done to make sure the respondents were aware of the types of OCSs that would be asked, which was beneficial so interviewees would have the right focus and keep the interviews brief and effective.

All the interviews were audio recorded which were then transcribed, coded and summarized by the researcher. There was no specific transcription convention used in this study, but only the symbol "**" as unknown statement, "##" as grammatical problem and "^^" as pronunciation mistake. The interview sessions were conducted after the researcher analyzed the questionnaire, which was a good way to validate the findings of the questionnaire. This tool was performed to answer Research Question 3. Regarding to qualitative analysis, the deductive thematic analysis was employed. As this method is useful when the researcher has predetermined framework and particular research questions that already recognize the main themes or categories used to group the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.7 Ethical Consideration

The permission to conduct the research was obtained by the academic director of the English department of a matriculation college in Selangor as well as the postgraduate office unit in the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics of UM. The information provided by the respondents were kept confidential and was only used for the purpose of the study. The respondents were informed of the purpose of the study in the consent letter attached to the questionnaire. In the structured interviews, the respondents were briefed on the purpose of the research at the beginning of their interviews. Their participation is voluntary during the process of the study and they may withdraw at any time without any explanation. A copy of the consent forms is attached in Appendix B.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter details the research design and instrumentations that were employed in the study, selection of the participants, pilot study and data collection procedures that followed. Finally, ethical consideration pertaining to data collection is deliberated and the manner in which the data was analyzed. The following chapter presents the results in relation to the research problems.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of data analysis. The first research question looks at the type of Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs) used by participants when communicating in English. To answer this, an SPSS descriptive analysis was used in order to describe the overall OCSs used by students. The second research question investigates the relationship between oral English language proficiency (OP) and OCSs used by students through Spearman correlation coefficients. The third research question identifies the possible reasons for using certain OCSs by students via structured interviews.

4.2 OCSs used by Malaysian Chinese students

This section will report the results of the questionnaire related to strategies on how to cope with speaking problems by participants in order to answer Research Question One "What are the OCSs used by Malaysian Chinese students when communicating in English?"

4.2.1 Quantitative Analysis of Students' Oral Communication Strategies

To investigate the overall score of OCSs used by participants, descriptive statistics were used. There are three levels of strategy usage proposed by (R. L. Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995), which are high level (mean score$\geq$3.5 but $\leq$5); moderate level (mean score$\geq$2.5 but $\leq$3.4); and low level (mean score$\geq$1 but $\leq$2.4). These levels were used to categorize the

students' OCSs results. Table 4.1 shows the descriptive statistics of students' overall scores on OCSs and the mean scores of each sub-strategy.

Table 4.1: Participants' Mean Scores of Oral Communication Strategies

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall OCS	42	3.5707	0.34696
Message Reduction and Alteration Strategies	42	4.2143	0.63575
Non-Verbal Strategies	42	3.9048	0.87121
Social-Affective Strategies	42	3.6508	0.48669
Fluency-oriented Strategies	42	3.5516	0.57440
Negotiation for Meaning Strategies	42	3.5119	0.72405
Accuracy-oriented Strategies	42	3.4143	0.67916
Attempt to Think in English Strategies	42	3.3690	0.74947
Message Abandonment Strategies	42	2.9286	0.78726

From Table 4.2, the top five OCSs used by the participants are highlighted in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Summary of the top five OCSs used by the participants

Rank	Strategies
1st	Message Reduction and Alteration Strategies
2nd	Non-Verbal Strategies
3rd	Social-Affective Strategies
4th	Fluency-oriented Strategies
5th	Negotiation for Meaning Strategies

The overall mean score of students' OCSs is (M=3.5707, SD=0.34696), which represents a high level of strategy use. Regarding the eight sub-strategies, Message Reduction and Alteration Strategies rank the highest (M=4.21, SD=0.64), which belong to the high-frequency level. This is followed by Non-Verbal Strategies (M=3.90, SD=0.87), Social-Affective Strategies (M=3.65, SD=0.49), Fluency-oriented Strategies (M=3.55, SD=0.57) and Negotiation for Meaning Strategies (M=3.51, SD=0.72), and they show high usage as well. The rest of the three strategies, which are Accuracy-oriented Strategies (M=3.41, SD=0.68), Attempt to Think in English Strategies (M=3.37, SD=0.75) and Message Abandonment Strategies (M=2.93, SD=0.79) belong to the moderate level. It is worth

noting that none of the strategies have fallen into the low-level usage. The results shown from the overall mean score and the mean score of each sub-strategy indicated that the participants are highly aware of their usage of OCSs in speaking and they can be regarded as high strategy users.

According to Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), different mean scores stand for the different frequencies in using the strategies. The mean score between 1-1.79 means 'never use the strategies', 1.8-2.59 means 'hardly use the strategies', 2.60-3.39 means 'sometimes use the strategies', 3.40-4.19 means 'usually use the strategies', and higher than 4.20 means 'always use the strategies'. The following Figure 4.1 demonstrates the percentage of how frequent the OCSs are used.
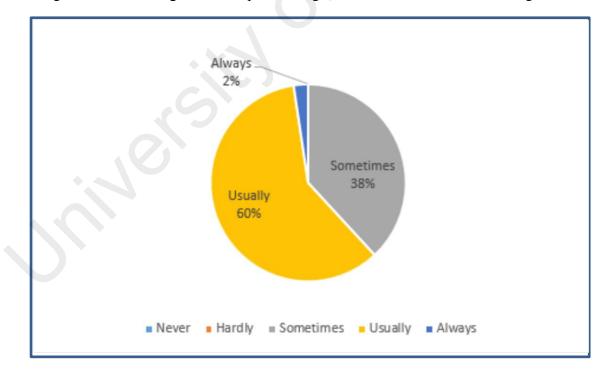
Figure 4.1: Percentage of Participants' usage of Oral Communication Strategies

As indicated in Figure 4.1, out of 42 participants, 60% (n=25) of them stated that they usually employ OCSs, 38% (n=16) of the participants reported that they sometimes use OCSs, and 2% (n=1) claimed that they always use OCSs. It is worth pointing out that

none of the respondents have fallen into the category of 'hardly' or 'never' using OCSs in speaking.

4.2.2 The most frequently used OCSs

From the findings, it is obvious that the most frequently used strategies are Message Reduction and Alteration, followed by Non-verbal, Social-affective, Fluency-oriented and Negotiation for meaning (See Table 4.2). In addition, items in the category of each strategy which are bigger than 3.5 will be in bold and discussed.

Firstly, the usage of message reduction and alteration strategies ranked the highest (M=4.21, SD=0.64), as the following table shows:

Table 4.3: Message Reduction and Alteration Strategies (N=42)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item22: I use words which are familiar to me in English.	**4.3571**	0.61768
Item 23: I try to avoid complicated expression and use simple expressions.	**4.0714**	0.92110

These two items ("use familiar words", "avoid complicated expression and use simple expressions") were reported as being frequently used with a mean score higher than 4.0. However, this result is contradictive with previous studies (Nakatani, 2005; Dörnyei & Scott, 1995). They stated that message reduction and alteration strategies are commonly used among foreign language learners of low proficiency. Whereas the present study shows that high proficiency learners also have a preference for using the said approach.

The next frequently used sub-strategy is non-verbal strategies, which refers to participants' strategic behaviors or actions of using eye contact, gestures, or facial expressions to

express their intention to the listener. Table 4.4 shows that most of the participants have a high usage of non-verbal strategies (mean score ≥ 3.5 but ≤ 5), according to the proposed category by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995).

Table 4.4: Non-Verbal Strategies (N=42)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item24: I try to make eye-contact when I am talking.	**4.2381**	0.82075
Item25: I use gestures and facial expressions if I can't find the appropriate words to express myself.	**3.5714**	1.29054

From

Table 4.4, both Item 24 and Item 25 were reported by participants to be of high usage (mean score≥3.5).

Social-affective strategies ranked in the third place among the eight strategies used by the participants (M=3.65, SD=0.49). This category is used by the learners to encourage themselves to continue engaging in oral communication via lowering down anxiety, self-encouragement and behaving socially. The following Table 4.5 illustrates the findings.

Table 4.5: Social-Affective Strategies (N=42)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item1: I try to use fillers (e.g. I mean…, well…, you know…, actually…) when I cannot think of what to say in English.	**3.5238**	0.74041
Item2: I try to give a good impression to the listener.	**4.0476**	0.66083
Item3: I don't mind taking risks even though I might make mistakes.	3.2381	0.90553
Item4: I try to enjoy conversing in English.	**3.7857**	0.81258
Item5: I try to relax when I feel anxious.	**3.5476**	0.96783
Item6: I actively encourage myself to express what I want to say in English.	**3.7619**	0.93207

As seen from Table 4.5, all the items except Item 3 were reported by participants to be of high usage (mean score≥3.5), while Item 3: "I don't mind taking risks even though I might

make mistakes" fell into moderate usage with a mean score of 3.24. Regarding the specific strategies among the 6 items of social-affective strategies, Item2 "I try to give a good impression to the listener" was reported by the participants as being mostly used (M=4.05), which indicates that the participants prefer to leave a good impression on the others. Item 1: "I try to use fillers (e.g. I mean…, well…, you know…, actually…) when I cannot think of what to say in English", Item 4: "I try to enjoy conversing in English", item5 "I try to relax when I feel anxious", and Item 6: "I actively encourage myself to express what I want to say in English" shows that students have a preference for using fillers and are able to relax and enjoy expressing themselves while communicating in English.

Next, fluency-oriented strategies ranked the fourth place among the eight strategies used by participants (M=3.55, SD=0.57). They refer to participants' strategic behaviors or actions to speak more fluently. The following Table 4.6 illustrates the findings.

Table 4.6: Fluency-oriented Strategies (N=42)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item7: I change my way of saying things according to the context.	**3.5238**	1.04153
Item8: I take my time to express what I want to say.	3.4286	0.91446
Item9: I pay attention to my pronunciation.	**3.5476**	0.96783
Item10: I try to speak clearly to make myself understood when I speak in English.	**4.1667**	0.72643
Item11: I pay attention to my rhythm and intonation.	3.0238	1.09295
Item12: I pay attention to the conversation flow.	**3.6190**	0.85404

For fluency-oriented strategies, 4 out of 6 items were reported as being frequently used (mean score≥3.5). The most frequently used strategy is Item 10: "I try to speak clearly to make myself understood when I speak in English" (M=4.17, SD=0.73). The second, third and fourth frequently used Fluency-oriented strategies are "I pay attention to the conversation flow", "I pay attention to my pronunciation", and "I change my way of

saying things according to the context". The results indicate that the participants focus on the clarity of their speech, pronunciation and coherence during interaction. In addition, some participants would focus on the context of their discourse as well.

As far as the negotiation for meaning as speaking strategies are concerned, this category is employed by learners to interact with interlocutors to improve comprehension via different approaches. The findings are illustrated in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Negotiation for Meaning Strategies (N=42)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item13: While speaking in English, I pay attention to the listener's reaction to my speech.	**3.7857**	1.04848
Item14: I give examples if the listener doesn't understand what I am saying in the language understood by the listener.	**3.7143**	1.08843
Item15: I repeat what I want to say in English until the listener understands.	3.4524	1.01699
Item16: I make comprehension checks to ensure the listener understands what I want to say.	3.0952	1.00752

As seen from the Table 4.7, 2 out of 4 items were reported as being frequently used (mean score≥3.5). The most frequently used strategy is Item 13: "While speaking in English, I pay attention to the listener's reaction to my speech" (M=3.79, SD=1.05). The second frequently used Negotiation for Meaning Strategies is Item 14: "I give examples if the listener doesn't understand what I am saying in the language understood by the listener" (M=3.71, SD=1.09). The results indicate that the participants may have the habit of focusing on the responses of their converser to check if they are able to comprehend one another and giving examples of expressions until the receiving end figures out the meaning intended. This finding supports previous studies done by Nakatani (2005) and Nakahama, Tyler and Lier (2001) that learners are active in using negotiation for meaning strategies to improve comprehension in SLA research.

4.2.3 The least frequently used OCSs

The least frequently used OCSs is the accuracy-oriented strategies which refer to participants' desire to speak accurately. The following Table 4.8 displays the findings.

Table 4.8: Accuracy-oriented Strategies (N=42)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item17: I pay attention to grammar used when I converse in English.	3.3095	1.09295
Item18: I try to emphasize the subject and verb of the sentence.	3.1190	1.17291
Item19: I correct myself when I notice that I have made a mistake.	**4.0238**	0.78050
Item20: I try to apply the English grammar rules when I speak in English.	**3.6667**	1.07446
Item21: I try to talk like a native speaker of English.	2.9524	1.12515

Regarding the Accuracy-oriented Strategies, 2 out of 5 items were reported as being frequently used (mean score≥3.5). The most frequently used strategy is Item 19: "I correct myself when I notice that I have made a mistake", then followed by Item 20: "I try to apply the English grammar rules when I speak in English". The results indicate that the ESL learners may seek grammatical range and accuracy by doing self-corrections as soon as they realize their blunders.

The second least frequently used OCSs is 'attempt to think in English strategies'. This category refers to participants' strategic behaviors to think as much as possible in English during interaction. Table 4.9 displays the findings.

Table 4.9: Attempt to Think in English Strategies (N=42)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item30: I think first of what I want to say in my native language and then construct the English sentence.	3.4048	0.79815
Item31: I think first of a sentence I already know in English and then try to change it to fit the situation.	3.3333	1.00406

As seen from Table 4.9, both of the items as reported by participants were of moderate usage (mean score≥2.5 but ≤3.4) based on the proposed category by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995). The standard derivation of Item 31 is 1.00, showing a relatively big variability on the participants' choices on this item. However, the standard derivation of Item 30 is 0.80, which is a bit lower than Item 31. This suggests that the diversity of participants' responses on the Item 30 was relatively smaller compared to Item 31 under the category of attempt to think in English strategies.

The third least frequently used OCSs is the message abandonment strategies, which refer to participants' strategic behaviors or actions to abandon their communication efforts completely or to leave the message unfinished. Table 4.10 displays the findings.

Table 4.10: Message Abandonment Strategies (N=42)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item26: I abandon the execution of a verbal plan and just say some words when I don't know what to say in English.	3.1905	1.08736
Item27: I leave a message unfinished if I can't make myself understood.	2.6429	1.03173
Item28: I ask other people to help when I can't communicate well.	3.3333	1.09693
Item29: I stop speaking in English when I realize I can't make.	2.5476	1.04069

As seen from the Table 4.10, all the items were reported by participants to be of moderate level usage (mean score≥2.5 but ≤3.4). Besides that, the standard derivation of the four items is bigger than 1, which shows that there is a relatively big diversity among

participants' choices. As for why they are being least used, this will be found out in the interview session.

4.3 Relationship between OCSs and Oral English Language proficiency

This section will focus on the quantitative analysis of the data collected in order to answer Research Question Two "To what extent does Oral Communication Strategy correlate with oral English language proficiency of students?"

4.3.1 Quantitative Analysis

In order to examine whether there is any significant relationship between OP and OCSs usage by students, Spearman correlation coefficients were used. There are two variables, OP (score level of the speaking test) is the independent variable (IV); OCSs is the dependent variable (DV). The results show that there is a statistically significant and sizeable association between OP and students' usage of OCSs (p<0.05; r=0 .41). (See Table 4.11).

Table 4.11: Association between OP and OCSs

			Score level of the speaking test	OCS
Spearman's rho	Score level of the speaking test	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.405
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.008
		N	42	42
	OCS	Correlation Coefficient	0.405	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.008	.
		N	42	42

In addition, Spearman correlation coefficients were applied to explore the relationship between the eight sub-strategies and students' OP. The results will be discussed as follows.

Table 4.12: Association between OP and sub-strategies

OCSs	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.
Fluency-oriented Strategies	0.422	0.005
Accuracy-oriented Strategies	0.409	0.007
Negotiation for Meaning Strategies	0.393	0.010
Social-affective Strategies	0.325	0.035
Non-Verbal Strategies	0.253	0.106
Message Reduction and Alteration Strategies	0.068	0.669
Message Abandonment Strategies	-0.054	0.733
Attempt to Think in English Strategies	-0.062	0.698

The correlation coefficients between OP and OCSs are presented in Table 4.12. Based on Cohen's (1989) criterion, r values of more than 0.3 are considered to be sizeable.

Firstly, as shown in Table 4.12, there is a statistically significant ($p = 0.005$, $r = 0.422$) and sizeable association between OP and the usage of fluency-oriented strategies, which indicates that with the increment of OP the use of fluency-oriented strategies has increased.

Secondly, there is a statistically significant ($p = 0.007$, $r = 0.409$) and sizeable association between OP and the use of accuracy-oriented strategies. In other words, with the increment of OP, the use of accuracy-oriented strategies has increased (See Table 4.12).

Thirdly, there is a statistically significant and sizeable association ($p = 0.010$, $r = 0.393$) between OP and the use of negotiation for meaning strategies.

Fourthly, there is a statistically significant and sizeable association ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.325$) between OP and the use of social-affective strategies, which indicates that with the increment of OP the use of social-affective strategy has been slightly increased.

Next, Table 4.12 shows that there is no statistically significant association (p>0.05, r= 0.253) between OP and the use of non-verbal strategies, which indicates that non-verbal strategies are used by students of different proficiency levels.

For message reduction and alteration strategies, it is shown that there is no statistically significant association (p> 0.05, r=0.068) between OP and the usage of message reduction and alteration strategies. The results corresponded with the findings for the first research question, in which message reduction and alteration strategies are used by all proficiency level learners.

As for message abandonment strategies, it is also shown that there is no statistically significant association (p= 0.733, r= -0.054) between OP and the usage of this strategy.

Lastly, the Table 4.12 also shows that there is no statistically significant association (p= 0.698, r= -0.062) between OP and the use of attempt to think in English strategies, which indicates the usage of this strategy has nothing to do with the participants' OP in the study.

Among the eight categories of OCSs, four categories of strategies show there is a statistically significant and sizeable association with participants' oral proficiency. The four strategies are fluency-oriented, accuracy-oriented, negotiation for meaning and social-affective respectively. The outcomes indicate that participants' increasing usage of the previously mentioned strategy categories would slightly contribute to their oral proficiency. Nevertheless, there is no statistically significant correlation between oral proficiency and the usage of non-verbal, message reduction and alteration strategies, message abandonment strategies and attempt to think in English strategies.

4.4 Reasons for choice of OCS

This section is to answer Research Question Three for the possible reasons of using OCS in speaking English. There were 9 participants for the interview and the purpose of the interview was to find out possible reasons for using certain OCSs in speaking English. The following table illustrates pseudonyms assigned to each subject to protect their identity.

Table 4.13: Participants for the interview

Band	Participant
Band5	P1; P2
Band4	P3; P4; P5; P6; P7
Band3	P8; P9

4.4.1 Reasons for the use of three most frequently used OCS

Table 4.14 below contains a summary of reasons derived from the interviews for using three most frequently used OCSs by nine interviewees.

Table 4.14: Summary of the three most frequently used OCSs by nine interviewees

Participant	3 of the most frequently used OCSs	Reasons
P1 Band5	Accuracy-oriented; Fluency-oriented	Wants to be understood well by others; Wants to get message across;
	Non-verbal	No worries about being embarrassed
P2 Band5	Social-affective	As mother tongue is Mandarin, cannot speak English very fluently; Tries to relax and do self-encouragement;
	Message reduction and alteration	It is important to transfer the message in a simpler and easier way rather than using complicated English;

	Non-verbal	Can express myself better;
P3 Band4	Fluency-oriented; Message reduction and alteration; Non-verbal	People can understand better; to attract attention
P4 Band4	Message reduction and alteration;	Helps me to speak better and have better coordination in speaking;
	Negotiation for meaning;	To convey message efficiently; examples give audiences better understanding;
	Fluency-oriented	Helps to better organize ideas
P5 Band4	Social-affective; Fluency-oriented; Message reduction and alteration	Helps to correct English language and increase knowledge; can help to correct pronunciation; increase confidence;
P6 Band4	Non-verbal; Social-affective; Message reduction and alteration	Use these strategies when don't know how to explain ideas; Scared people cannot understand what I'm trying to say
P7 Band4	Fluency-oriented;	Help to practice English effectively;
	Accuracy-oriented;	Can improve speaking skills by correcting mistakes.
	Message reduction and alteration	To express views clearly and to avoid misunderstanding.
P8 Band3	Social-affective;	To relax
	Fluency-oriented;	To be understood by others
	Message reduction and alteration	To get the message across
P9 Band3	Fluency-oriented Social-affective Accuracy-oriented	To communicate smoothly; To be understood by others; To improve speaking skills

As shown in the Table 4.14, the most frequently used OCSs by the nine interviewees is

the message reduction and alteration strategy, which is similar to the findings of the

questionnaire, where this strategy also ranks the highest (M=4.21, See Table 4.1). This is

followed by fluency-oriented strategies, social-affective strategies, non-verbal strategies,

accuracy-oriented strategies and negotiation for meaning strategies in the interviews.

It can be deduced that participants in the current research are highly aware about the

importance of those above-mentioned strategies. For example, seven out of nine

participants mentioned the message reduction and alteration strategies as they think that it is important to deliver simple messages to audiences for it to be better understood. In addition, speaking with familiar words in English can improve their confidence. Concerning the fluency-oriented strategies, they believe that to speak fluently is a crucial thing as they want to be well understood by their interlocutors through clear pronunciation, intonation and rehearsing. For non-verbal and social-affective strategies, participants prefer the two because they stated that both strategies allow them to express themselves freely while attracting attention from their interlocutor as well. It is worth noting that only three participants mentioned accuracy-oriented strategies, which implies that ESL speakers pay less attention to speaking accurately. It also explains the reason why accuracy-oriented strategies did not belong to the top five strategies (see Table 4.2) used by students in the present study.

4.4.2 Reasons for the use of specific OCSs

Table 4.15 shows the top five OCSs used by nine interviewees based on the interview questions 2 to 6 and only related responses will be selected for discussion.

Table 4.15: The Top Five OCSs Used by Nine Interviewees

OCSs	Individual strategies	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Message reduction and alteration	Message reduction and alteration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Non-verbal	Eye-contact, gestures, facial expressions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Social-affective	Lower anxiety		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
	Self-encouragement		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Asking for assistance		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
	Behave socially	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Fluency-oriented	Paying attention to rhythm, intonation,	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

	pronunciation and clarity									
	Rehearsing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Consider speaking context	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Negotiation for meaning	Repeating & exemplifying			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Approximation			✓	✓					
	Comprehension checks			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓

According to Table 4.15 above, all of the interviewees chose message reduction and alteration strategies as they think that it is important to facilitate the transferring of their message in an easier and simpler way rather than using complicated English. They also used these strategies to avoid misunderstandings while maintaining an acceptable coordination in speaking. For example, participant P2 reported that: "I use message reduction and alteration strategies more, as my vocabulary is not good enough and I use simple English and I use easy English to speak English, because I think it is important to speak and make people understand rather than using complicated English and they don't understand" (P2, Band 5). Similarly, participant P5 reported that: "I would use it during my presentation in the class. I would try to use simple words during presentation which can help my friends to understand easier and help me so that I can develop my ideas to my friends. And I would like to use this strategy because it can help me to talk better and also I can increase my English language with simple words" (P5, Band 4).

Therefore, students with different proficiency levels tend to use message reduction and alteration strategies most frequently while they are conversing in English, which is in line with (Huang, 2010; Chen,2009; Bialystok, 1990)'s findings that non-native speakers have a preference of utilizing simple and familiar words and expressions instead of unfamiliar ones in conversation. Moreover, they would not give up at difficult situations when conveying meanings in a genuine conversation, as these participants took the initiative to give a positive impression and tried to enjoy the process of oral communication.

As for the reasons for using non-verbal strategies in speaking English, the answers given by the participants in the interviews also support the findings of the questionnaire, implying that non-verbal strategies are the second most frequently used by students (See Table 4.3). Based on Table 4.14, eight out of nine participants in the interviews mentioned that they frequently use non-verbal strategies. The reasons given by the respondents included: attracting audiences' attention; showing respect to interlocutors; showing interest in the topic and conversation; making speech look as natural as possible; helping people to understand better; lowering anxiety; feeling more comfortable; improving communication. For example, participant P3 reported that: "I would try to make eye-contact when I'm in speaking. And I would also use gestures and facial expression if I don't know how to express myself. So I would use in my daily communication with friends and also with my lecturers. Because I think that to have eye-contact and hand gestures when speaking with friends is to show that I'm interested with the topic and #conversasing form# (conversation). And also to attract their attention when I'm speaking" (P3, Band 4). These findings are similar with (Huang, 2010; Chen, 2009; Bialystok, 1990), which stated that students have a preference of utilizing hand- gestures to aid in getting the message through and eye contact to gain the interest of the person on the receiving end.

However, only one participant (P7) stated that she rarely uses non-verbal strategies, as she holds the opinion that content is more significant. She tries to make audiences understand by speaking clearly instead of using gestures, eye-contact and facial expressions (P7, Band 4).

Next is the social-affective strategies. Eight out of the nine participants stated that they often utilized social-affective strategies. The five reasons why they used this strategy are: firstly, they want to leave a good impression on interlocutors; secondly, to reduce anxiety and build confidence; thirdly, to avoid failed conversations and to get continuous conversations; fourthly, to show friendliness and communicate well, to maybe become good friends; fifthly, to relax.

This finding made add-ons to Zulkurnain & Kaur, (2014); Liu, (2010) and Nakatani (2006)'s findings that social-affective strategy is the preferred strategy used by non-native speakers in handling communication breakdowns.

Participant P4 mentioned that: "I use it a lot. Hmm, I usually use it especially during doing public speaking in school or presentation. As I'm quite #a# (an) easily nervous person, #so# (deleted) especially speaking English is quite hard for me. #So# (deleted) I need to encourage myself many #time# (times) before I speak. And I would lower my anxiety. And I usually ask for assistance when I encounter difficulties" (P4, Band4). Meanwhile, participant P1 felt that he rarely uses this strategy, only in the situation of talking to people of higher authority. This is because he wants to leave a good impression on them (P1, Band 5).

The fifth in place is the fluency-oriented strategies. The answers given by the participants in the interviews support the findings in the questionnaire that students show high usages of fluency-oriented strategies (See Section 4.2.1). From Table 4.15, eight out of nine partakers believed that practicing fluency-oriented strategies is a proper way to enhance their oral proficiency efficiently. They can focus on the pronunciation, intonation and conversation flow as well. In addition, it is an effective way to be understood well by interlocutors.

As the findings suggest, it shows that students focus on the clarity and conversation flow of their discourse in order to accomplish their language learning. This finding corroborated with Zulkurnain & Kaur's (2014) findings that Malaysian university students prefer fluency-oriented strategies when engaging in English conversation with others.

However, participant P6 mentioned that she seldom uses fluency-oriented strategies in speaking English. This is because she is used to speaking in her mother tongue (Mandarin) and national language (Bahasa Malaysia) and only started using English in college. These findings are influenced by the fact that the current study was conducted in Malaysia, which has a multi-cultural and multilingual context.

Last but not least, the negotiation for meaning strategies were looked into. According to Table 4.15, it can be seen that participants P1 and P2 stated that they did not use strategy of negotiation for meaning. Participant P1 explained that while talking to people, he can usually can get his point across. Rarely had he faced a situation where he could not manage. Participant P2 elaborated that she did not like to repeat or give examples, which is why she used the message reduction and alteration strategy more often. These responses reflected that proficient level (Band 5) learners in the present study were capable of getting the message across to interlocutors directly and precisely without employing negotiation for meaning. Furthermore, this finding suggests that participants with a proficient level had a preference for using simple words and expressions instead of complicated language.

However, other participants with satisfactory and modest levels (Band 4 & Band 3) held the opinion that they would choose negotiation for meaning as a speaking strategy by giving examples in order to let interlocutors understand efficiently, because they seem to think that exemplifying is the best way to illustrate meaning.

In short, these answers drawn from participants' interviews indicate that satisfactory and modest level students (Band 4 & Band 3) seem to employ more negotiation for meaning as a speaking strategy compared to proficient level (Band 5) students.

The message abandonment strategies deemed to be the least frequently used strategy. The interview episodes showed that seven out of the nine participants least use message abandonment strategies. The two reasons given include: firstly, it is impolite to leave the message unfinished, since it would leave interlocutors confused; secondly, no matter how difficult it is, the participants would persist in their endeavor to understand the message rather than leave sentences hanging. They would be able to find proper words or give examples to deliver their information. The answers given by the participants in the interview also support the findings of the questionnaire that the message abandonment strategy is the least frequently used by students in the study (See Table 4.1).

The second least frequently used strategy was accuracy-orientation. The participants mentioned that they seldom try to imitate the native speaker's tone as it is difficult to replicate their slang. It can be seen from participant P3 who explained that she seldom try to speak like a native speaker, as it is hard to have their slang. In addition, it was hard to pay attention to their grammar while speaking in a casual conversation. The participants considered speaking as a natural thing rather than academic knowledge. As participant P2 elaborated that to make a person understand what you are trying to express is the most

important thing in the process of communication instead of imitate a native speaker's accent that would be weird.

These findings implied that students pay less attention to the accuracy-oriented strategies while speaking English. However, it is worth noting that most of them did not abandon their efforts to communicate, indicating a strong intention to achieve communication goals and an impetus that favors their future progress.

The final interview question is "After knowing which OCSs, do you think your oral proficiency has been improved? To what extent?"

Table 4.16: The effect of strategies on oral proficiency

Participant	Certain OCSs	To what extent
P1 (Band5)	Accuracy-oriented; fluency-oriented; non-verbal	A pretty sizeable improvement
P2 (Band5)	Social-affective	Improved quite a lot
P3 (Band4)	Message reduction and alteration	Improved a bit
P4 (Band4)	Fluency-oriented	Improved a bit
P5 (Band4)	Message reduction and alteration	Improved a bit
P6 (Band4)	Social-affective	Improved a lot
P7 (Band4)	Accuracy-oriented; fluency-oriented	Improved a bit
P8 (Band3)	Social-affective	Improved a bit
P9 (Band3)	Message reduction and alteration	Improved a bit

As seen from Table 4.16 above, it shows that strategies of message reduction and alteration, fluency-oriented, social-affective, accuracy-oriented and non-verbal strategies used by participants can enhance their oral proficiency, which is consistent with the outcomes in the questionnaire (See Table 4.12).

4.5 Discussion of findings

Findings of the study will be discussed according to the research questions and details as follow:

RQ1: What are the OCSs used by Malaysian Chinese students when communicating in English?

The comparison of the overall scores on OCSs and mean scores of each sub-strategy used by participants is shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Participants' Mean Scores of OCSs

	Mean
Overall OCS	3.5707
Message Reduction and Alteration Strategies	4.2143
Non-Verbal Strategies	3.9048
Social-Affective Strategies	3.6508
Fluency-oriented Strategies	3.5516
Negotiation for Meaning Strategies	3.5119
Accuracy-oriented Strategies	3.4143
Attempt to Think in English Strategies	3.3690
Message Abandonment Strategies	2.9286

From Table 4.1, it can be seen that the overall mean score on OCSs is (3.57), which indicates that the participants are highly aware of the importance of using OCSs in speaking English. The mean score for message reduction and alteration strategies is the highest (4.21). This indicates that participants in this study employ strategies of message reduction and alteration most frequently. The mean score for message abandonment strategies is the lowest (2.93) and this shows that participants least use message abandonment while communicating in English. This particular finding is different from the findings of Nakatani (2006) who found that students with low proficiency levels commonly use avoidance strategies, which are message reduction and alteration strategies

and message abandonment strategies. Nonetheless, his study was conducted among EFL university students in Japan. The current study was conducted in Malaysia, where it is a multi-cultural and multilingual context. Considering this fact, it appears that the findings of the current study differ from previous studies in other contexts.

Furthermore, the participants in the current study also frequently use non-verbal strategies, social-affective strategies, fluency-oriented strategies and negotiation for meaning strategies. The findings in this study imply that students have a strong awareness of promoting OCSs in communication. Such results make add-ons to Zhou's (2014) finding that learners use non-verbal strategies the most frequently, followed by social-affective strategies, fluency-oriented strategies, negotiation for meaning strategies, message reduction and alteration strategies and accuracy-oriented strategies, while they use message abandonment strategies the least.

RQ2: To what extent does OCSs correlate with OP of Malaysian Chinese students?

To answer RQ2, the results reveal that there is a statistically significant and sizeable association between OP and students' usage of OCSs (p<0.05; r=0 .41) (See Table 4.11).

This particular finding differs from Nakatani's (2006) study, which found that low proficiency language learners rely more on message reduction and alteration strategies and message abandonment strategies. The answers given by the participants in the interview might explain the reasons plausibly. It is important for participants to deliver messages easier and simpler, so as to avoid misunderstanding and have a good coordination in speaking. Concerning the message abandonment strategies, students believe that it is impolite to leave a message incomplete to the listener. Thus, no matter

how difficult it is, the participants will always endeavor to fully convey their message to be understood rather than leave sentences hanging.

RQ3: What are the possible reasons for using certain OCSs in speaking English?

From what has been illustrated in previous sub-chapters, it can be seen that students use certain OCSs for their own reasons. For instance, many students tend to use the strategy of message reduction and alteration, through which they can be much easily understood by others. And by using this strategy, students are able to speak more confidently since they adopt the familiar expressions. Some students consider their vocabulary is not good enough, thus, they would use easy English in communication in order to talk better and leave a good impression on listeners, as well as enjoy the process of oral communication more. In terms of the non-verbal strategies, some think it is natural and feel more comfortable to make gestures or use other body language, by which they can express themselves better, so as to improve communication. For social-affective strategies, students want to leave a good impression on their interlocutors and manage to lower anxiety as well. It is worth mentioning that a majority of the participants have a preference for fluency-oriented strategies as they want to be understood well by paying attention to the clarity and flow of their speech in order to achieve their language learning goals.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter provides findings from the present research, which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative results. The quantitative section examined, firstly, the overall usage of OCSs by the participants. Results showed that the overall mean score of OCSs was at high-level usage (Mean > 3.5). This indicated that the participants had a high

awareness of using OCSs in speaking English. In terms of the sub-strategies, message reduction and alteration strategies ranked the highest, followed by non-verbal strategies, social-affective strategies, fluency-oriented strategies and negotiation for meaning strategies. The second research question examined whether there was a noteworthy connection between oral English language proficiency and OCSs usage by the students. Results presented that there was a statistically significant and sizeable correlation ($p<0.05$, $r =0.41$) between oral proficiency and students' usage of OCSs. The third research question found that students used certain existing OCSs for their own reasons, such as showing respect to listeners; helping people to understand better; building confidence and allowing them to express themselves freely.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Introduction

This study identified the OCSs used by Malaysian Chinese students when communicating in English. The study also looked into the relationship between OP and OCSs as well as possible reasons for using certain OCSs.

The data obtained in this study shows that OCSs of various kinds were used by participants. In this study, message reduction and alteration strategies were the most frequently used as they indicated their preference for delivering messages in an easy and simple way rather than using complex expressions.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that ESL students were highly aware of the usage of OCSs and there is a significant and sizeable association between OP and students' usage of OCSs. Finally, at the end of this chapter, suggestions for future research are presented.

5.2 Summary

The findings in Chapter 4 were summarized to answer the research questions in this research as listed below:

The usage of message reduction and alteration strategies ranked the highest among the OCSs (M=4.21). It is worth noting that participants of all proficiency levels in the interview chose this strategy in communication because they deemed it to be important for expressing opinions in an easy and simple way so that it could facilitate the understanding of their interlocutors.

Next, non-verbal strategies were found to exist, being the second most commonly used among OCSs, with a mean score of 3.90. In this study, it was found that participants regard non-verbal communication as a significant strategy. Eight out of nine participants mentioned in the interview that they frequently used eye-contact, facial expressions and gestures. They felt that non-verbal communication was an important approach to show respect to the interlocutor as well as show interest in the topic.

Social-affective strategies were also examined and it was found to be the third most frequently used with a mean score of 3.65. Participants utilized this kind of strategy as they intended to leave a good impression on their interlocutors without stressing themselves in the process.

The fluency-oriented strategy was found to be the fourth most frequently used strategy with a mean score of 3.55. Also, it was found in the interview that eight out of nine interviewees viewed practicing fluency-orientation communication as a good way to enhance their OP effectively and efficiently.

Lastly, the negotiation for meaning as speaking strategy received a mean score of 3.51. Despite coming in as the fifth most commonly used strategy, the negotiation for meaning as speaking strategy scored a mean of 3.51, which is relatively high, based on the set benchmark (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). In this study, the data suggest that participants with satisfactory and modest levels held the opinion of choosing this strategy, since they considered exemplifying to be the best way to give a full picture of their ideas to interlocutors. However, participants with a proficient level did not have a preference of using this strategy as they felt that they could get their message across to interlocutors and they preferred using message reduction and alteration strategies more often while speaking in English. Thus, they did not like to repeat or give examples.

5.3 Implications of the study

Based on the data found, there was a significant and sizeable association between OP and OCSs. Thus, teachers and learners should be aware of the influence that OP has on OCSs. The understanding of the OCSs in English language learning should be highlighted. In addition, teachers are encouraged to improve the performance of students with OCSs through appropriate training programs.

Research with a focus on message reduction and alteration strategies has been neglected in previous studies. Nevertheless, based on the findings of the current study, message reduction and alteration strategies might also contribute to ESL learners' performance in the process of communication.

Furthermore, the research findings indicate that learners of proficient, satisfactory and modest levels in this study were highly aware of the importance of using OCSs in speaking English and it is worth mentioning that all of them used message reduction and alteration strategies most frequently.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

Based on the findings of this present study, three suggestions for future research are put forward. Firstly, due to the relatively small sample size, the findings should not be generalized to the larger population of second language learners, as this study involved only 60 Malaysian Chinese students at a matriculation college in Malaysia. In addition, only 9 interviewees were investigated through qualitative analysis due to readiness and availability of participants. The aim of the interviews was not to reach a conclusive result

that could be extrapolated to the larger population, but to suggest the possible reasons that learners use certain existing OCSs. Thus, future large-scale studies are required, which could further validate the research findings. Furthermore, it would enable researchers to use advanced models and tests such as Nvivo in the qualitative analysis.

Secondly, the current study dealt with only two variables. OP is the independent variable (IV), and OCSs is the dependent variable (DV). Further studies could expand the scope of investigation by taking in account other variables, such as task types (e.g. real scene classroom setting). Although previous studies (Dörnyei, 1995; Nakatani, 2006) focused on identifying the effect of training communication strategies on speaking performance, there is no solid academic agreement among researchers on the teaching of communication strategies. Considering the significant and sizeable association between OP and OCSs in this study, conducting an empirical research of OCSs used in the real classroom setting could help teachers get more effective and efficient teaching-related awareness with respect to OCSs.

Thirdly, further research could also focus on the message reduction and alteration strategies employed by ESL learners since few studies have been carried out in this area.

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